

# Newsletter for January 2019

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## The Universal Declaration at 70: UEA speaks out on Human Rights



### Universala Esperanto-Asocio

The Universal Esperanto Association issued a strong statement on the occasion of Human Rights Day 2018 and the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stressing that, across the world, “everywhere, humankind is faced with discrimination (including discrimination on the basis of language), the use of force instead of peaceful dialogue, and forgetfulness regarding the lessons of history.” UEA, the statement explained, wrote human rights into its constitution a year ahead of the Universal Declaration, in 1947. Furthermore, the annual celebration of the birth of an early advocate of human rights, Ludwik Zamenhof, founder of Esperanto, takes place on December 15, in the same week as Human Rights Day. UEA’s full statement follows:

“On the occasion of Human Rights Day, December 10, 2018, and celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, accepted on this date in 1948, the Universal Esperanto Association at once congratulates the United Nations on its constant, firm and persistent defence of human rights across the world, and points out that, more than ever before, the world’s peoples have need of the Declaration and the principles it enshrines.

“Everywhere, humankind is faced with discrimination (including discrimination on the basis of language), the use of force instead of peaceful dialogue, and forgetfulness of the lessons of history.

“The Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) declares its solidarity with the principles of human rights and with the United Nations in its struggle to realise these principles.

“Founded in 1908, UEA – the principal world association for the use and dissemination of the international language Esperanto – has, from its beginning, worked for the ideas of human equality and worldwide understanding.

“Forty years after it was founded, and before the official acceptance of the Universal Declaration by the United Nations, the Association included respect for human rights in its Constitution as a basic condition for its activities. Today it works to circulate information on human rights in over 120 countries.

“Human Rights Day closely coincides with another annual celebration – that of the birth of the initiator of Esperanto, Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof, who dedicated his life to the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind, and whose birth is celebrated on 15 December. ‘Absolute justice, equality and fraternity among the peoples is fully possible in practice,’ Zamenhof asserted in 1905.

“‘Every country,’ he declared in 1906, ‘belongs not to this or that people but with equal right to all its inhabitants,’ and ‘in their family life all people have a full, natural and incontestable right to speak whatever language or dialect they wish and to confess any religion that they wish’ – but to do so in harmony with those who practice another language or another religion. For this reason he recommended Esperanto for all humankind.

“Today UEA stresses the congruence of Zamenhof’s efforts and the struggle for fully universalizing human rights. The Association invites all defenders of human rights to an awareness of the importance of language rights and language equality in the work to achieve a more just and peaceful world, and pledges its full support for the ideals of the Universal Declaration.”

## The Universal Esperanto Association at UNESCO

“Communication, Information, Dialogue” was the main theme of the International Conference of Nongovernmental Organizations at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from December 17 to December 19, 2018. Over 400 NGOs met to discuss how to strengthen relations among the NGOs themselves and primarily among the NGOs, the permanent UNESCO delegations, the UNESCO Commissions, and the various sectors of UNESCO itself.

Although the NGOs are “at home in UNESCO,” as H.E. Ambassador Ghazi Ghairi, permanent representative of Tunisia to UNESCO, explained, it is not always easy to draw proper attention to their work and their points of view. He stressed the importance of recent NGO Forums on migration (in Tunis) and on the sciences (in Moscow), even if organizing them required the support of a Member State or a foundation, and even if they require better follow-up. (Both of these Forums were attended by delegations from the Universal Esperanto Association.)

A new Liaison Committee was established, chaired by Marie-Claude Machon-Honoré of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. Numbers of proposals were put forward, particularly to improve communication among NGOs and between NGOs and UNESCO. There was no lack of suggestions for Forums or International Days, but particular attention was given (especially by UEA) to the International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

## Symposium on multilingualism in international organizations May 9 and 10

Language and language difference is an often underestimated or overlooked dimension in the effectiveness of the United Nations in many fields – from administration to economic and social development, from peacekeeping to diplomacy, and in many places in between. The Study Group on Language and the United Nations, founded in part on the initiative of the Universal Esperanto Association, has for the past several years organized an annual symposium on aspects of language and the UN. This year's symposium, "**The United Nations at 75: Listening, Talking and Taking Action in a Multilingual World**" will take place on Thursday and Friday, May 9 and 10, at the Church Center, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, beginning at 9:00 a.m. on May 10.

Call for papers: [www.languageandtheun.org](http://www.languageandtheun.org).

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