

# Newsletter for March 2013

Issue 3, March 2013

## UN Geneva: UEA Intervenes in Esperanto Language

For the first time at a United Nations meeting, the Universal Esperanto Association intervened in Esperanto at the 5th Forum on Minorities, at the Palace of Nations, the UN Office in Geneva. The meeting, on November 27 and 28, was concerned with implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1992. The representatives of the Association, Cesco Reale and Stefano Keller, addressed the Forum on the difficulties experienced in practice of the rights defined in the Declaration, Keller in Esperanto and Reale providing consecutive Spanish interpretation.

In their address, the UEA's representatives addressed the problem of linguistic discrimination, referring to such discrimination in hiring practices, where this form of discrimination is far more prevalent than the other forms mentioned in the Declaration. Following the meeting, the UN's Independent Expert on minority issues, Ms. Rita Izsák, congratulated the Association for its intervention and expressed herself positively about the role of Esperanto.

UN regulations prescribe that a speaker may use a language other than the six official languages if interpretation is provided into one of the official languages. UEA was associated with an earlier intervention at the 2nd Forum in 2009, when the representative of UEA invited a representative of the Swiss Federation of the Deaf to conduct her intervention in sign language, with interpretation in French.

"As far as I know," said Stefano Keller, who is also UEA's board member responsible for external relations, "this is the first time that Esperanto has been used for an intervention at the UN."

Numerous speakers at the Forum mentioned problems associated with language rights. Representatives of nongovernmental organizations stressed the importance of translating the Declaration into as many languages as possible and disseminating it worldwide. More information at: <http://www.lingvaj-rajtoj.org/eventoj>

## Language at the UN: Study Group Established

Under the leadership of Humphrey Tonkin and others, a study group has been established to explore and document the United Nations' use of languages in its work, both formal and informal. "Our goal," states Dr. Tonkin, "is to get a better sense of how the UN uses languages to get its work done. What languages are used in informal exchanges? How does the UN communicate linguistically with its various publics? How is business conducted in those units of the UN whose work involves such fields as development and peacekeeping? These are areas into which formal language policy does not reach, and we actually know very little about their language use." In the coming months, Dr. Tonkin, representative of the Association at the UN headquarters in New York, and himself a specialist in language policy and planning, plans to convene a meeting of the group, which currently has some fifteen members, to talk about a research plan. Anyone interested in joining the group should contact [info@esperanto-un.org](mailto:info@esperanto-un.org).

## Symposium on Multilingualism in Higher Education to Take Place in Reykjavik

The Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems is planning a symposium in Reykjavik, Iceland, July 18-20, on the topic "Languages and Internationalization in Higher Education: Ideologies, Practices, Alternatives." The purpose of the symposium is to address the growing role of English as the medium of instruction in higher education and to analyze both its advantages and its drawbacks in promoting and preserving multilingualism and cultural diversity. Reykjavík, Iceland, July 18-20, 2013. The symposium is taking place under the auspices of the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies and the Vigdis Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages. The topic will be linked particularly to the coming publication of the book edited by Anna Kristina Hultgren, Frans Gregersen, and Jacob Thøgersen, *English in Nordic Universities: Ideology and Practice*, to be published in 2014 in the series *Studies in World Language Problems*, by the publisher John Benjamins, Amsterdam. However, contributions on the language-of-instruction situation in higher education in other parts of the world will be welcome. Write to [info@esperanto-un.org](mailto:info@esperanto-un.org) for further information.

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