

Newsletter for November 2017

Number 31, November 2017

The Esperanto movement celebrates United Nations Day

24 October 2017. UN Day marks the anniversary of the entry into force in 1945 of the UN Charter. With the ratification of this founding document by the majority of its signatories, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United Nations officially came into being.

24 October has been celebrated as United Nations Day since 1948. Among numerous Esperanto events around the world, the Universal Esperanto Association congratulated the United Nations on the occasion of its 72nd anniversary.

The UN General Secretary, António Guterres, sent the following message on the occasion of this year's United Nations Day.

Our world faces many grave challenges.

Widening conflicts and inequality.

Extreme weather and deadly intolerance.

Security threats – including nuclear weapons.

We have the tools and wealth to overcome these challenges. All we need is the will.

The world's problems transcend borders.

We have to transcend our differences to transform our future.

When we achieve human rights and human dignity for all people – they will build a peaceful, sustainable and just world.

On United Nations Day, let us, 'We the Peoples', make this vision a reality.

Thank you. Shokran. Xie Xie. Merci. Spasibo. Gracias. Obrigado.

António Guterres

Universal Esperanto Association's UN representative addresses UN translators

17 October 2017. At the invitation of the director of the Documentation Division of the UN's Department of General Assembly and Conference management, Cecilia Elizalde, the Universal Esperanto Association's UN representative, Dr. Humphrey Tonkin, today addressed members of the Division staff on "The Importance of Languages in the UN Agenda." In his lecture he suggested that UN officials and others outside the language services tended to underestimate the importance of languages not only within the structures of the organization but also in its development programmes: "If texts move smoothly across the six official languages of the General Assembly, for example, little attention will be given to the army of translators who make that happen; if the work of a GA committee or a multinational conference proceeds seamlessly, the less sharply attentive participants will barely notice that the interpreters are working ... Unfortunately many people tend to treat language services in the same way as they treat the plumbing: as long as the hot-water tap produces hot water and the cold tap produces cold water, and as long as nothing drips, no one actually commends the plumbers: but they complain when there is no hot water or when the cold tap runs hot or the hot tap runs cold." As for the UN's external activities, Dr. Tonkin pointed out that languages are not mentioned at all in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, nor among the 169 targets that accompany them.

On the other hand, he noted that interest in multilingualism is growing in the UN. In May the General Assembly proclaimed a new International Translation Day, to be celebrated each year on 30 September, and a new General Assembly resolution on multilingualism recognizes the importance of dialogue – two-directional communication – for sustainability and stressed the importance of language knowledge beyond the six UN languages.

Dr. Tonkin himself well-known as a specialist on language policy, stressed that language discrimination is a matter not only of identity discrimination, directed against people because of the language they speak (much as gender or race are objects of discrimination), but communication discrimination: we should avoid using languages that our interlocutors do not understand, but look for common languages where full two-directional communication can take place.

The resolution also calls for an audit of language knowledge among the more than 40,000 UN employees so that this language knowledge can be put to good use. "Linguistic diversity is not just a problem to be overcome but an opportunity to be used positively. Ideally, the UN should seek just and effective solutions to internal language problems and external channels that allow communication with the peoples of the world in their languages, for authentic and effective dialogue."

Italian Esperanto Federation wins prestigious human rights award

18 October 2017. The International Free Press Society FLIP and the Italian section of Amnesty International have awarded this year's Global Civilization and Human Rights Award to the Italian Esperanto Federation. The award (a painting and certificate), named for the former vice-president of FLIP, Antonio Russo, was presented to the Federation's president, Michela Lipari, at a recent ceremony in Rome, along with the following commendation:

The Italian Esperanto Federation, founded in 1910, has been a legally recognized non-profit association since 1956. It is a regular participant in campaigns organized by the world association of Esperantists to assist Esperantists who are victims of natural catastrophes or of war in various world regions. It contributes to the East-West Series of UNESCO by publicizing the literary masterpieces of the various world cultures. Italian works translated into Esperanto include Dante's Divine Comedy, Machiavelli's The Prince, Verga's The House by the Medlar Tree, Manzoni's The Betrothed, Ungaretti's The Life of a Man, Leopardi's Canti, Pascoli's Myricae, and others. To the Italian public the Federation offers masterpieces of the Esperanto world, among them Crusoes in Siberia and Masquerade by Tivadar Soros, The Infant Race by William Auld, Zamenhof Street by Roman Dobrzynski, and additional titles.

Among IEF's constitutional goals is the following: "Inspired by the ideals of Esperanto, [the Federation] initiates actions of solidarity aimed at promoting a deeper cultural integration of individuals and peoples with differing languages."

These are goals and principles shared by the Human Rights 2017 Award of FLIP and of the Italian section of Amnesty International; these

organizations wish to acknowledge their value, and give particular recognition to the president of IEF, Michela Lipari.

The General Assembly creates International Translation Day

30 September 2017. On 24 May this year, the General Assembly, in an important resolution on translation, praised the work of professional translators: “Professional translation, as a trade and an art, plays an important role in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, bringing nations together, facilitating dialogue, understanding and cooperation, contributing to development and strengthening world peace and security.”

In its preamble, the resolution alluded to the Sustainable Development Goals, “in which it is recognized that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development.” “Respect for the world’s cultural and linguistic diversity,” the resolution stated, “is an essential prerequisite for the promotion, in the United Nations, of the spirit of openness, equity and dialogue,” and it recognized “the role of multilingualism in the activities of the United Nations and its projection to the world, as a core value of the Organization, and its pursuit as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally.”

The resolution declared 30 September International Translation Day, aimed at celebrating the role of translators and raising public consciousness of the value of translation.

The Universal Esperanto Association has for many years stressed that the UN gives insufficient attention to linguistic diversity, despite its official language policy defining language use within the organization itself. Outside the organization, the United Nations seldom addresses the question of linguistic diversity as a factor in the planning and realization of its programmes for development: the experts make their plans with the aid of the major languages, particularly English, and assume that it is hardly necessary to consider the fact that the people to whom such plans are frequently directed, namely the poor and the underrepresented, cannot play an effective role because they do not speak the language of the planners. The Universal Esperanto Association, by way of its UN representatives, constantly emphasizes this linguistic gap between authors of the plans and the people to whom the plans are directed.

In part at the urging of UEA, a few years ago the Study Group on Language and the UN was established. The Study Group brings together planners, UN personnel, language policy experts, diplomats, and NGO representatives to study UN language issues and to raise UN consciousness about the importance of language at every level.

Soros Lecture, November 10, features publishing in Esperanto

15 October 2017. The final lecture in the Tivadar Soros Lecture series will feature publisher Ulrich Becker (November 10). The lecture will take place in Room 9207 at the City University of New York Graduate Center, 34th Street and Fifth Avenue, New York City.

Ulrich Becker’s topic will be “Esperanto is (not) dead: About the enduring discrepancy between the perception of Esperanto as a language without culture and its extraordinary cultural achievements.” He adds: “Throughout the history of Esperanto, its proponents have been confronted with the criticism that they are promoting a language that cannot develop a sustainable culture, because its speakers are not an ethnically or culturally definable entity or based in a geographically unified area. The actual cultural achievements of Esperanto speak an entirely different language, both with regards to the cultural output within the Esperanto movement and the cultural impact Esperanto has been having on the world. The lecture will focus, among other topics, on the field of publishing in Esperanto.”

Ulrich Becker is the principal of the publishing house Mondial, which specializes in books in and about Esperanto and publishes one of the movement’s leading literary magazines. He is an author of prose and poetry in Esperanto and German, was a co-founder of the German Society for Interlinguistics GIL and worked as manager, organizer, and editor in national Esperanto associations.

The lecture series commemorates Tivadar Soros, whose two books written in Esperanto, *Crusoes in Siberia* and *Masquerade*, describe the experiences of the author in the First and Second World Wars respectively. The lectures, delivered in English, feature the work of several New York area scholars currently at work on Esperanto and planned language.

39th UNESCO General Conference in Paris

31 October 2017. UEA and UNESCO established formal relations in 1954, and our representatives have been actively engaged in informing national delegates (ministers and ambassadors) and staff members about Esperanto and language issues ever since. In Paris, at the 39th General Conference of UNESCO from October 30 to November 14, a dozen Esperantists from UEA, the youth organization TEJO, and the teachers’ association ILEI are contacting delegates in various languages and distributing documents. They are also intervening in the Commission on Education on the essential role of the mother tongue in literacy, and in the Commission on Culture on the importance of linguistic diversity to avoid the destruction of minority cultures. For the first time, UEA has been given the opportunity to address the Plenary with a three-minute intervention on November 6. Because her eight-year term of office ends this year, Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, is receiving praise and compliments for guiding the organization in a period of crisis. Her successor is a woman – the former minister of culture for France, Audrey Azoulay. Ms. Azoulay will face the challenges of climate change, terrorism, and cultural diversity. UNESCO remains primarily a laboratory of ideas and must resist politicization. Mali gave particular thanks for UNESCO’s involvement in the reconstruction of Timbuktu with a fashion parade accompanied by music and song. Also new and particularly appreciated was an interview with Nobel laureate Lech Walesa. Chosen as President of the 39th General Conference was a Moroccan, Ms. Zohour Alaoui, who defines herself as “a woman, an Arab, and a Muslim.”

Ceremony at UNESCO marks the conclusion of Zamenhof Year 2017

31 October 2017. To mark the conclusion of the Zamenhof Year, the Polish UNESCO delegation will host a meeting on Monday, 11 December, at 9:30 in conference room XI in the UNESCVO Headquarters in Paris. The overall topic will be “Globalization, Internet, UNESCO Courier: Where Does Esperanto Stand 100 Years After the Death of its Founder?” Welcoming comments will be provided by H.E. Krystyna Zurek, ambassador of Poland, and Maryse Wanda Zaleski-Zamenhof, great-granddaughter of the author of Esperanto L.L. Zamenhof. Presentations will follow by Sébastien Moret, doctoral candidate at the universities of Geneva and Tallinn, on “Why Did Esperanto Win?”; Jean-Claude Lescure, historian, on “Esperanto Confronts Globalization” and Guilherme Fians, of Brazil, doctoral candidate at the University of Manchester, on “Esperanto Now and in the Future: One Community and Its Communications.” Following a

break, Chuck Smith, who launched the Esperanto apps Duolingo and Amikumu, will discuss “Modern Media in the Service of Esperanto.” He will be followed by Trezoro Huang Yinbao, Chinese foundation president, on “UNESCO Courier in Esperanto,” and H.E. Giorgio Novello, ambassador of Italy to Norway and Iceland, on “A New Language for UNESCO?” Presentations will be in French or Esperanto with simultaneous interpretation. RSVP: <https://esperanto-france.org/annee-zamenhof>.

Office of the Universal Esperanto Association at the United Nations
777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.
212-687-7041

www.esperantoporun.org

Office of the Universal Esperanto Association at the United Nations
777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.
212-687-7041