

# Newsletter for November 2018

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## “Negotiation through the spoken and written word is superior to confrontation and violence”: UEA speaks out to its members and to the United Nations on UN Day, 24 October 2018



**Universala Esperanto-Asocio**

In its message this year on the occasion of United Nations Day, 24 October, the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) congratulated the United Nations on its 73rd year and urged speakers of Esperanto to support the work of the United Nations family. It drew particular attention to the long history of coöperation between the the Association and international organizations, particularly in the area of international peace and reciprocal understanding:

“The Universal Esperanto Association, founded in 1908, was re-structured in the years immediately following World War II and the defeat of the forces of fascism and genocide. Our goal, like those of the United Nations, coming into being at that time, was to promote language over bombs, and understanding over prejudice. We continue to share with the United Nations a belief that peaceful negotiation through the spoken and written word is superior to confrontation and violence, inclusion is preferable to exclusion, and discussion and agreement are essential for the sustainability of the planet. We encourage our members to follow the work of the United Nations and to lend their support to its efforts for peace and understanding.”

## Conference of NGOs marks 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and urges action by NGOs

In its role as a board member of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the United Nations, the



Universal Esperanto Association sponsored a resolution on the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to be celebrated on December 10. The resolution was presented and approved at the Conference’s recent board meeting in New York.

Stressing the importance of the Universal Declaration and the risk of either forgetting it or taking it for granted, the resolution stressed that the Declaration “was formulated in the aftermath of World War II and the defeat of the forces of fascism and genocide,” and that “the Universal Declaration has given rise to a body of international law and international agreements that continue to help preserve the peace and allow for peaceful relations among peoples.” It was therefore “a crucial element in the post-war settlement based on the United Nations Charter, adopted at the founding of the United Nations three years earlier, and the adoption of a number of international instruments intended to establish a rules-based international order rooted in international law.”

“Conflicts in many parts of the world, and the accompanying neglect of human rights,” the resolution states, “are producing massive involuntary displacement of people and undermining respect for human rights even in countries where in the past they have been increasingly respected,” and, hence, “now, more than ever, in a world in which the forces of globalization on the one hand and rising intolerance on the other are causing governments to ignore fundamental rights and freedoms, such fundamental rights and freedoms must be reinforced.”

The resolution calls on all NGOs to recognize the 70th anniversary and make it an occasion to reaffirm the importance of the Universal Declaration in today’s world.

## Protecting language workers: Esperanto speakers urge its importance

While speakers of Esperanto favour adoption of the international language Esperanto as a means of communication across language communities, they also recognize that all efforts to reduce linguistic misunderstanding bring benefits to the international community. Hence their support for organizations such as Red T, a coalition of organizations of translators and interpreters that seeks to provide protection to such language workers in combat situations, where many of them play a vital role and where, as is the case of journalists, they are frequent victims of violence.

Speaking at the opening of the documentary photo exhibition “Interpreters on Mission: Contributing to Peace” at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 26 September 2018, the UN representative of the Universal Esperanto Association, prof. Humphrey Tonkin, stressed that language workers in combat situations, “engaged simply in promoting understanding,” are “often viewed with hostility, either as enemies or as insufficiently committed to whatever cause is tearing warring populations apart.”

“To take language workers for granted in conflict situations,” Dr Tonkin stated, “is to put them at risk. Wisely, we have in recent years recognized the risk to journalists in such conflict situations: effective international dialogue requires a free and open press and an informed citizenry. But if journalists are in danger, so are language workers, whose risk of death and injury is alarmingly high.”

“Even the UN has blind spots,” said Dr Tonkin, “and one of them is language. At the heart of what the UN does is linguistic exchange. Yet we undervalue the effects of language difference, both positive and negative, and we seldom recognize the importance of unfair discrimination on grounds of language.”

Dr Tonkin spoke at the invitation of the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the UN, Ambassador Valentin Rybakov, himself a former professional translator. The Belarus Mission sponsored the exhibition, along with the missions of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

“We welcome this exhibition,” Dr Tonkin added, “which, paradoxically, delivers the message of the interpreters themselves, and speaks not through them, but for them. We urge on everyone to give greater attention to language and its effects, in all spheres, and to seek solutions that accommodate diversity while ensuring communication.”

## **UEA represented at UNESCO forum on migration**

Renée Triolle, representative of the Universal Esperanto Association at UNESCO, was among the participants in the UNESCO NGO Forum “Another Perspective on Migration” that took place in Tunis on September 26 and 27. A total of 140 NGOs participated, from some forty countries. A major goal of the meeting: to dispel misunderstandings about migration and to develop strategies for dealing with these misunderstandings. Among these strategies were providing better opportunities at home (when migrants leave their home countries, the result is a net loss to those countries), and educating the public about the actual situation of migrants (as opposed to the many misperceptions, exaggerations, and instances of xenophobia).

All of these efforts require linguistic understanding. Language remains a major barrier in caring for migrants, giving them employment, enabling dialogue with local populations, and integrating migrants into the workforce and the schools.

The issue is likely to reëmerge when the UNESCO General Conference meets in December.

## **Esperanto medical association joins HIFA**



The Universal Medical Esperanto Association (UMEA), an organization affiliated with the Universal Esperanto Association, was recently approved as a member organization of HIFA, Healthcare Information for All, a global network of health professionals, publishers, librarians, technologists, researchers, and policymakers promoting universal and user-friendly access to relevant, reliable health information. Such information is considered a vital part of meeting the World Health Organization’s goal of Health For All and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. UMEA was founded in 1908 to spread and cultivate the use of the international language Esperanto in medicine. The very aim of Esperanto is to overcome language barriers. From its foundation down to today, UMEA has been active in this direction by supporting collaboration among the international membership of the association. It organizes medical conferences, works together with national medical associations and health care providers even in remote regions of the world and pursues specific projects to overcome language barriers in medicine. UMEA has published medical journal of its own since 1923, *Medicina Internacia Revuo*, MIR, which covers diverse topics in health care and publishes articles in various languages with abstracts in English and Esperanto.

## **Personnel**

We are delighted to welcome Jon Liechty as manager of UN and NGO relations at the Association’s UN office in New York City, and Raul García as liaison with the Association’s UN Representative, Humphrey Tonkin.

The Association’s representative to UN Vienna, Prof. Hans Michael Maitzen, has recently announced that Alfred Heiligenbrunner will join the Association’s Vienna delegation as of January 1, 2019, as Deputy UN Representative.

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