

Newsletter for March 2017

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Language and the SDG's: Symposium focuses on vulnerable populations

1 March 2017. Christine Hélot and François Grin will be featured speakers at this year's symposium on language and the United Nations organized by the Study Group on Language and the UN. Professor of English in the Teacher Education Department of the University of Strasbourg, France, Christine Hélot is a specialist in educational linguistics with a particular interest in issues of linguistic justice and the education of migrant children. François Grin is Professor of Economics in the Faculty of Translation at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. He is widely regarded as a leader in the area of language and economics and has published extensively in that field.

The two-day symposium will take place on Thursday and Friday, May 11 and 12, at the UN Church Center, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York. Its topic will be "Language, the Sustainable Development Goals, and Vulnerable Populations." Advocates for the Sustainable Development Goals, the principal element in the UN's development agenda for the period 2015-2030, stress the need to reach the most vulnerable populations first – but these populations are often cut off by barriers of language and by a failure to recognize the need for two-way communication. The problem is made all the greater by the fact that these vulnerable populations are continuing to grow as ever larger numbers of people are displaced from their homes by war.

The symposium, which is open to UN personnel, NGOs, researchers and others, aims to raise the consciousness of those involved in development work about the need to understand and listen to the voices of those who are often unheard, and to promote research on these problems. Details on the symposium are available at www.languageandtheun.org.

UEA's Message on the occasion of International Women's Day

8 March 2017. Today the Universal Esperanto Association issued the following statement on the occasion of International Women's Day

International Women's Day is an occasion both to reflect on the progress made towards the removal of discrimination against women and the assertion of their equal rights, and also to consider the long journey towards equality that remains to be made.

The Universal Esperanto Association is particularly concerned with the educational and social disparities affecting girls and women. Large numbers across the world are denied access to education on a par with their brothers, and the proportion of illiterate women in the world is greater than that of men. These conditions go hand in hand with more limited access to languages of wider communication and political participation, and hence with less influence in familial and social decision-making.

Nor is progress uniform: in some parts of the world, the condition of women is even worsening.

At the same time, the UEA recognizes and honours the leading role women play in movements for linguistic and cultural revitalization, and for the protection of the domestic sphere from various forms of oppression and discrimination. Such efforts are an essential part of the struggle to establish a world where many cultures and languages can coexist in harmony. The protection and advancement of the rights of women are a vital dimension of this struggle.

On this International Women's Day, we express our solidarity with movements to end discrimination against women and girls, and to build a sustainable future in which all people are treated with equal care and respect, irrespective of language, culture, gender, and other forms of diversity.

Preparations for Seoul meeting move ahead

28 February 2017. Plans for the 102nd World Congress of Esperanto, due to take place in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from July 22 to 29, are well under way. "Tourism and Development: Paths to Sustainability" will be the theme of the congress. The decision to concentrate on sustainable tourism was inspired by the UN General Assembly's naming of the year 2017 the International Year for Sustainable Tourism for Development.

Based at the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, the congress is expected to bring together over one thousand participants, particularly from national Esperanto associations in China, Japan, Vietnam, Mongolia, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand, in addition to the Korean Esperanto Association. The annual congress is an occasion for meetings of the Universal Esperanto Association, theatrical and musical presentations, scholarly meetings, literary contests, and numerous other events.

Esperanto in the Soviet Union featured in upcoming events in New York City

11 March 2017. The year 2017 marks the hundredth anniversary of the October Revolution, and two lectures in the Tivadar Soros Lecture Series will serve as reminders of this event. On Friday, March 10, Professor Brigid O'Keeffe (Brooklyn College, City University of New York) lectured on early Esperantist delegations to the Soviet Union. In the years following the Revolution, many worker Esperantists visited their comrades in Russia to witness the achievements of the new Russia. The results were mixed, with some Esperantists returning home enthusiastic, while others were disillusioned by what they saw.

Early Soviet enthusiasm for Esperanto was extinguished with the swing to nationalism under Joseph Stalin. The Esperanto movement was brutally suppressed and its leaders executed or exiled. This process will be described in the following Tivadar Soros Lecture, on May 12, to be given by German historian Ulrich Lins. His two books *Dangerous Language: Esperanto under Hitler and Stalin* and *Dangerous Language: Esperanto and the Decline of Stalinism* have recently (2017) been published by Palgrave Macmillan, translated from Esperanto by Humphrey Tonkin.

Brigid O'Keeffe's lecture took place at the CUNY Graduate Center, Fifth Avenue at 34th Street. Ulrich Lins's will take place at the UN Church Center, 777 United Nations Plaza, at 4:00 pm.

See www.soroslectures.org.

Lins's two books are not the only recent books on Esperanto. Esther Schor's *Bridge of Words: Esperanto and the Dream of a Universal Language* (Metropolitan Books, 2016) continues to receive extensive positive reviews. Professor Schor and film maker Sam Green will host a lecture/screening on Esperanto at the Mid-Manhattan Library, at 455 Fifth Avenue, across from the New York Public Library, on Wednesday, March 15, at 6:30 pm. See

<https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2016/02/22/bridge-words-esperanto-and-dream-universal-language-esther-schor-poet>

All events are free and open to the public.

TEJO at ECOSOC: Recognizing the value of youth

1 March 2017. Francesco Maurelli, Sara Spanò (UEA board member) and Raúl J García (vice-president of the New York Esperanto Society) recently represented the Esperanto youth organization TEJO at the ECOSOC Youth Forum at United Nations New York. Francesco Maurelli discussed the financing of youth organizations: "I explained that the first major challenge is recognizing the value of youth and youth work. I cited a study that showed that for every dollar invested in young people, society receives between 8 and 24 dollars. If such returns are recognized, it is both good and necessary to increase investment in youth and not leave them to live off what's left. And, finally, it's not enough just to give them money, but to put the money in the hands of those who need it. I referred, among other things, to language barriers and the rights of minorities. And then I gave some examples from my work in TEJO, ending with the capacity-building project between Europe and Africa."

"Among my professional activities is precisely that of assuring sustainable financing of activities for youth organizations (through the firm Kosmo), so I have a lot of experience on the subject and its challenges. I was glad that I was able to put so much into a short speech, namely the need for recognition, for money, and for accessibility. I mentioned ICMYO, I mentioned TEJO, I spoke about linguistic matters, and I presented TEJO's African project. I think that I touched on some important issues for young people. Numbers of people congratulated me afterwards and said that my speech was important, interesting, and lively."

<http://tejo.org/tejo-partoprenas-en-ecosoc-junulara-forumo-2017-ce-la-unuigintaj-nacioj>

Esperantists mourn the death of Pinyin developer

1 February 2017. Zhou Youguang, whose recent death at the age of 111 was widely reported in the press, was best known as the developer of Pinyin, the Romanized writing system for the Chinese language that is used in transliteration from Chinese. With the aid of Pinyin, countless Chinese children, along with foreigners all across the world, have been assisted in learning the language; Pinyin has made it easy to use standard keyboards to input Chinese characters, and it has had the effect of standardizing geographical names and other terminology.

Less well known is that the international language Esperanto served as a major inspiration for Zhou Youguang, as it did for earlier pioneers of Chinese Romanization: Esperanto speakers from Shanghai (where Zhou Yougang studied in the 1920s) were among those who pioneered the development of Romanized systems for Chinese in the 1920 and 1930s. The great Chinese writer Lu Xun, a speaker of Esperanto, was among those who promoted Romanization.

Sixth African Congress of Esperanto takes place in Tanzania

1 February 2017. Esperanto speakers from eight African countries gathered in Bunda, Tanzania, for the Sixth African Esperanto Congress from December 24 to December 31. Participants called on the Universal Esperanto Association to hold its annual congress in an African country (the congress has taken place at least once in all of the other continents), and to help train leaders and organizers of the Esperanto movement across Africa. The final congress resolution also urged African Esperantists to raise their own ability to speak and write Esperanto and to use the language "to conserve, rescue and develop" African culture by translating African works into Esperanto and themselves writing and publishing in the language.

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