

Newsletter for March 2018

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Declaration of the Universal Esperanto Association on the occasion of International Mother Language Day, 21 February 2018



Rotterdam, 21 February 2018. This year's International Mother Language Day was once again the occasion for numerous events and communiqués by Esperanto organizations across the world. In solidarity with UNESCO and the United Nations, the Esperantists stressed the importance of providing mother tongue education for literacy and basic education, and stressed the importance of language rights. "Esperanto speakers are convinced about two things," remarked Humphrey Tonkin, UN representative of the Universal Esperanto Association: "the rights of all peoples to use their own languages, and the need to find effective and impartial ways of communicating across languages."

UEA's message on Mother Language Day stated as follows:

"On the occasion of International Mother Language Day, a celebration established by UNESCO as a reminder of the wealth of linguistic diversity across the world, the Universal Esperanto Association points out that, while in some countries attention is given to the conservation of linguistic diversity and the use of mother tongues in education, in other countries, all across the world, discrimination, in various forms, still continues against speakers whose mother tongues are small and unrecognized.

"As a result, many children are deprived of the possibility of learning in their own languages, even at the elementary level, and accordingly suffer disadvantage in their earliest years of schooling.

"In this way, little by little languages are disappearing and dying, and entire peoples are losing their intellectual treasure – a point made by many linguists both within and outside UNESCO.

Biological and linguistic diversity are indivisibly linked and interdependent. The loss of linguistic diversity causes the loss of traditional knowledge essential for sustainable biodiversity, for life itself.

"Speakers of the international language Esperanto favour equality among all languages and all cultures, whether large or small. Beginning as early as the 1950s, our Association has always collaborated with UNESCO in protecting local languages and their use in education. With UNESCO's establishment of International Mother Language Day in 1999, the Universal Esperanto Association has regularly participated in marking the occasion with its own activities (posters, declarations, events), and is doing so again this year with materials in several languages (<http://www.linguistic-rights.org/21-02-2018/>).

"The core values of this Day, namely diversity and the right of everyone to speak their mother tongue, are also the values supported by the worldwide Esperanto movement. We, the speakers of Esperanto, wish to cause no language to disappear; we wish that all languages continue to exist, that everyone's language rights be respected, and that linguistic justice apply in all communication.

"Esperanto is a means of protection against the disappearance of languages, as the former President of the Republic of Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, has explained: "It is time that the various nations understand that a neutral language could become a real bulwark for their cultures against the monopolistic influences of only one or two languages, as now appears increasingly evident. I sincerely hope Esperanto will rapidly make more progress to assist all of the world's nations."



Amikeco trans limoj

“Behind Esperanto there are no states, economic interests, imperialist drives – nor are there peoples whose interest lies in the disappearance of other peoples, or their languages, or the acquisition of others’ markets. Behind Esperanto are people of goodwill from many peoples and nations, who work together for justice for all cultures and all languages, in the spirit of peace.”

International Mother Language Day coincided this year with International Friendship Week, a worldwide celebration when Esperanto speakers stress the value of Esperanto as a means of promoting friendship across national, ethnic, and ideological barriers. Events marking International Friendship Week took place in numerous countries across the world under the slogan “Amikeco trans limoj,” friendship across boundaries.

Association holds training seminar for UN representatives in New York

New York, 27 January 2018. As part of its ongoing series of training seminars, the so-called AMO series, the Universal Esperanto Association recently organized a one-day session designed to assist local Esperanto speakers interested in the United Nations to represent the Association and the Esperanto movement in UN meetings and activities. The seminar was led by Sara Spanò (Italy), UEA board member responsible for external relations, with the assistance of Francesco Maurelli (Italy), vice-president of the youth organization TEJO, Rakoen Maertens (Belgium), active in his national UN association and at UNESCO, and Humphrey Tonkin, the Association’s UN representative.

Statement of the Universal Esperanto Association on Holocaust Remembrance Day

Rotterdam, 27 January 2018. Each year on January 27 the United Nations marks Holocaust Remembrance Day, the date of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp erected by the Nazis as part of their programme of genocide. It is a day of mourning, an annual pledge never to forget those who died nor the monstrosity of the genocide that destroyed them, and a day when the peoples of the world are urged to say the words “Never Again” – never again should such acts of barbarism be allowed to take place.

The Esperanto movement mourns particularly those believers in internationalism and international understanding who, either because of their race or because of their political or other convictions, perished at the hands of the Nazis. They included every direct descendant of Lazar Ludvik Zamenhof, the founder of Esperanto, save one, and numerous other Esperantists in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. They included Esperantist civil servants, teachers, doctors, journalists, poets. And among the survivors were also Esperantist heroes who shielded others from extermination.

This is a day, too, when we remember those who did not or could not stand up to this tyranny and butchery; and we pledge, with the example of the Holocaust before us, to stand up to injustice wherever and whenever it occurs. We may perhaps remember the words of the Esperantist poet Leen Deij, writing in 1948, and expressing sentiments that relate to all peoples and all religions.

Al la juda foririnto

Li fermis la kofron, manpremis – adiaŭ!
Sen ia protesto li iris... Hodiaŭ
mi tion komprenas; li povis nur miri,
ke mi, la kristano, lin lasis foriri. Kun kapo klinita la kofron li portis.
Li iris la vojon al Auschwitz kaj mortis
sen ia protesto... Li povis nur miri,
ke mi, la kristano, lin lasis foriri.

Kaj iam la filo kun filo parolos,
kaj tiu demandos, la veron li volos.
La mia silentos... kaj povos nur miri,
ke mi, la kristano, lin lasis foriri.

Ni sentis kompaton kaj monon kolektis,
dum kelkaj el ni la infanojn protektis.
Sed Auschwitz *ekzistis!* Nu, kion plu diri?
Ke mi kaj ke vi... ni lin lasis foriri.

Danish United Nations Association emphasizes linguistic human rights

To the Jew who walked away

He closed the suitcase lid, he shook my hand,
And said farewell, and could not understand.
He made no protest – What was there to say?
And I, the Christian, let him walk away. With head bowed low, his
suitcase at his side,
He took the road to Auschwitz, where he died
Without a protest. What was there to say?
And I, the Christian, let him walk away.

One day, his son – suppose his son should live –
Will look for answers, which my son can't give.
He'll turn to me, and I shall have to say
That I, the Christian, let him walk away.

And some will say: “We did the best we could,
Gave money, sheltered children...” Well and good.
Yet Auschwitz *happened* – all that we can say
Is: “You and I – we – let him walk away.”

(trans. Elizabeth Stanley)

Copenhagen, 20 December 2017. Thanks to the intervention of our committee member Ileana Schrøder, the Danish United Nations Association has added linguistic equality to the chapter on human rights in its new “Programme of Principles.” “Equal rights generally, including languages, are an important protection against divisive attitudes,” according to the new programme. We are pleased to note this attention to languages and rights, an often neglected subject in discussions of human rights.

SAVE THE DATE!

Symposium on multilingualism in international organizations and international co-operation to take place on May 10 and 11

New York, 28 February 2018. 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, “Multilingualism in International Organizations and International Co-operation,” will take place on Thursday and Friday, May 10 and 11, at the Church Center, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, beginning at 9:00 a.m. on May 10.

Multilingualism in international co-operation entails both costs and benefits: *costs* because it requires mechanisms such as the selection of multilingual staff and the mediation of language professionals; *benefits* because, if properly managed, it includes all parties to decision-making, promotes consensus, supports programme delivery, and aids dissemination of results. Thus it favours social justice and inclusion. Increasingly, multilingualism is seen as a positive force, though it is not always recognized as such by all stakeholders.

Within the United Nations, for example, owing in particular to the scarcity of available data, advocates of multilingual language policies often face ideological, financial and administrative resistance, despite a growing recognition that multilingualism, as a core value of the UN, is a potential source of strength.

This symposium seeks to focus on, and generate interest in, these issues. Contributions will address the challenges of supporting multilingualism in organizations or in sites of international co-operation across different sectors (e.g. business, diplomacy, economics) or communities. Theoretical and methodological studies will be included, as well as those addressing specific practical challenges – especially papers that focus directly on the work of the UN system or other international bodies, or research having obvious implications for their work. Keynote speaker will be Michele Gazzola (Humboldt University, Berlin), well known as a specialist on the economics of language policies.

To find out more about the symposium, and to register, go to www.languageandtheun.org. On the website you will also find the final report of the 2017 symposium, on “Language, the Sustainable Development Goals, and Vulnerable Populations.”

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