

Newsletter for May 2019

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Young Esperanto speakers play leading role in UN meeting



Universala Esperanto-Asocio

The ECOSOC Youth Forum is a preparatory body for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in which the work of youth organizations promoting the Sustainable Development Goals is planned and coordinated.

One proof of the growing interest in Esperanto among young people was the fact that a delegation of seven Esperantists represented the Esperanto youth organization TEJO in the Youth Forum of ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, held recently in New York. A particular honour was the fact that Rakoén Maertens, a member of this seven-person delegation, was picked as keynote speaker for the Forum's closing ceremony, also addressed by Secretary General António Guterres and other UN dignitaries.

Rakoén explains: "We set up meetings with senior members of the UN Secretariat on language policy," explained Rakoén. "We met several times with individuals working on a new UN resolution (a key document guiding the work of the organization) on language policy and multilingualism. We are now considering various ways to influence the outcome in favour of Esperanto and our goals."



"We also discussed organizing side events on language policy and language barriers, combining TEJO and various other language groups (speakers of French, Portuguese, etc.). Such side events can help strengthen our influence and success."

Of his speech, Rakoén said: "The UN particularly wanted a personal, inspiring story, so I talked about intercultural communication and understanding. Right before my speech, I had the pleasure of meeting Secretary General António Guterres. Over a thousand people attended the speech (national delegations, NGOs, and additional viewers through live streaming)."

Read the Esperanto translation of the speech at

https://www.tejo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Prelego_ECOSOC_RakoénMaertens.pdf

Watch the speech in English at https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=492&v=tyrzs8QesAU

In addition to Rakoén, the event was attended by TEJO representatives Francesco Maurelli, Sasha Murr, Sara Spanò, Marcus Griep, Hans Becklin and Cassidy Walker.

Especially striking were Rakoén's final remarks: "Let me end with one of my best loved quotes, by an indigenous Australian named Lilla Watson. It catches the essence of what I have said: 'If you have come here to help me, you're wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, let us work together.'"

Coming soon: Symposium on Language and the United Nations, New York, May 9-10

The Study Group on Language and the United Nations invites you to a Symposium on “The United Nations at 75: Listening, Talking and Taking Action in a Multilingual World” on Thursday & Friday, May 9-10, 2019, at the Church Center, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York (First Avenue at 44th Street).

The United Nations Charter was signed in San Francisco on June 26, 1945, and came into force on October 24 of that year. Thus the UN will celebrate its 75th anniversary in the year 2020. For the past 74 years, the UN has worked (in the words of the Charter) “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,” “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights,” and “to promote social progress.”

In short, it has created a framework of international agreement and cooperation that, though fragile and often threatened, has endured for three generations. What can be done to secure its future?

According to Article 1 (3) of the Charter, among the purposes of the United Nations is the achievement of “international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”

This symposium will give particular attention to the question of language. Although the UN has always promoted dialogue, in recent years it has grown more sensitive to the need for equality in dialogue. In other words, it has become increasingly aware of the need to listen to its constituents rather than simply talking to them, and to understand as well as to be understood. Such concepts are inherent in the Sustainable Development Goals accepted in 2015 and setting the agenda for the UN as it grows closer to its first hundred years.

In a world in which thousands of languages are spoken, is the UN ready for equal dialogue, now and in the future? If not, what is to be done to create linguistic readiness – both in the internal workings of the organization and in its relations with the larger world? These questions have particular relevance in 2019, the UN’s International Year of Indigenous Languages.

Principal speakers at the symposium will be:

Thomas Ricento, Professor and Research Chair, Emeritus, at the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary, Canada. An Applied Linguist with a particular interest in politics and language policy, his *Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method* is regarded as a classic in the field. Much of his work has focussed on language minority communities in North America, language ideologies and language attitudes, and identity and language; and he has edited volumes on, among other topics, language policy and planning, language policy and political theory, and language and policy in the United States and Canada. His most recent book is *Language Politics and Policies: Perspectives from Canada and the United States* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Narjess Saidane. Ambassador Saidane was named Permanent Observer for the International Organization of La Francophonie to the United Nations in 2017. Previously (2013-17) she worked for the UN Development Programme’s (UNDP) Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, serving from 2013 to 2017 as Deputy Special Representative of the Administrator based in Jerusalem. Previous positions include: Deputy Resident Representative for the Joint Office of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Cabo Verde, and similar roles in Mauritania and in her native Tunisia.

Iris Orriss. Iris Orriss serves as Director of Internationalization at Facebook. She has been with Facebook since January 2013 and is passionate about eliminating the internet language barrier. Her work focuses on growing Facebook in international markets. In addition, she is a member of the board at Translators without Borders, a nonprofit organization that specializes in providing vital information in the right language at the right time. Before coming to Facebook, she was a director at Microsoft working on product internationalization and development process in the enterprise and language technology divisions. A native of Germany, she was educated at Freie Universität Berlin.

Sponsors of the symposium are the Center for Applied Linguistics; l’Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie; the Esperantic Studies Foundation; the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems; and the Universal Esperanto Association

The programme and details of registration are available at www.languageandtheun.org.

Universal Esperanto Association attends Vienna board meeting of CoNGO

As a board member of CoNGO (Conference of Nongovernmental Organizations in Co-operative Relations with ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council of the UN), the Universal Esperanto Association attended the CoNGO board’s recent meeting in Vienna. Attending on behalf of the Association were Humphrey Tonkin, UEA representative at UN New York, and Hans-Michael Maitzen, UEA representative at UN Vienna.

On the agenda, in addition to routine administrative affairs, were preparations to celebrate in the year 2020 the 75th anniversary of the founding of the UN, and consideration of the current state and future prospects of the relations between the UN on the one hand and so-called civil society (including NGOs) on the other. UEA was named to a three-person sub-committee to study this latter question in greater detail. The other two members of the sub-committee are Cyril Ritchie, CoNGO vice-president, and Laurie Richardson, of the women’s organization FAWCO.

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