

Newsletter for September 2013

Issue 6, September 2013

World Esperanto Congress Emphasises Biological and Cultural Diversity

The 98th World Congress of Esperanto, meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, from July 20 to July 27, put special stress on the importance of maintaining diversity in a world increasingly homogenised, where languages and ecosystems are constantly under threat. Such diversity should be balanced by “the growing opportunities for cross-border and cross-cultural understanding” created by advances in technology. The congress pledged to cooperate with others in creating “a world ... where all languages and cultures can coexist and prosper in a climate of mutual respect.” While such expressions of international solidarity are a common theme of the congress organizer, the Universal Esperanto Association, this resolution was particularly explicit in its linkage of diversity with the idea of an international language. Behind the resolution lay another common theme of the Association, namely that a neutral language, owned by no particular nation or state, could serve to protect the autonomy of local languages and cultures.

The text of the resolution follows.

We, 1034 participants from 55 countries all over the world attending the 98th World Esperanto Congress in the world's most northerly capital, Reykjavik, Iceland,

After a number of sessions discussing the congress topic “Islands but not alone: towards fair communication between language communities”,

Note that islands – whether of a historical, geographical or social nature – are original sources of biological and cultural diversity, which it is worth preserving and protecting;

Express their concern at the increasingly acute threats to that diversity because of various levelling and destructive trends in the dominant political and economic systems in the world;

At the same time welcome the growing opportunities for cross-border and cross-cultural understanding created by the spread of communication tools such as the Internet;

Emphasize the importance of language diversity and the fair use of languages for protecting the cultural richness we have inherited from the islands of the world;

Point out that this protection of diversity is a core value of the movement for the international language Esperanto;

Confirm the willingness of the Esperanto movement to cooperate in the objective of a world of “islands without isolation” where all languages and cultures can coexist and prosper in a climate of mutual respect;

Call for worldwide cooperation on the basis of fair language relations to combat the threats of climate change and biological and cultural homogenisation;

Affirm the urgency of action in this field to preserve the treasures of our island-like planet.

Canada's Mark Fettes Elected Association President

At the World Esperanto Congress in Reykjavik, Iceland, the Universal Esperanto Association's governing body elected a new seven-member executive committee to lead the Association for the next three years. Elected as president was Dr. Mark Fettes, professor of education at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, a specialist in language and education with a particular interest in Canada's First Nations. Dr. Fettes has extensive experience in the Association, having served for a number of years as a staff member in the Association's head office in Rotterdam, and as editor of the Association's journal. More recently he has been active in the U.S.-based Esperanto Studies Foundation, where he served as president and was a principal advocate of web-based Esperanto-language instruction. Joining him in the executive committee are:

Stefan MacGill, a native of New Zealand, resident in Hungary

Martin Schäffer, a native of Germany, resident in Mexico

Barbara Pietrzak, for many years director of the Esperanto program on Polish Radio

José Antonio Vergara, of Chile

Lee Jungkee, of the Republic of Korea

Stefano Keller, a native of Hungary, resident in Switzerland, where he represents the Association at UN-Geneva

In addition, **Nico Huurman** will serve as representative of UEA's youth organization, and **Mireille Grosjean** will represent the organization of Esperanto teachers.

Of the seven members of the executive committee, only two (Pietrzak and Keller) are holdovers from the previous team. Dr. Fettes succeeds Dr. Probal Dasgupta, of India, who served as president for six years.

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