

## **Declaration of the Universal Esperanto Association on the occasion of World Refugee Day, 20 June 2019**

On June 20 each year, the United Nations marks World Refugee Day. According to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951, a refugee is someone who has fled their country owing to “a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.” Among the many factors forcing people to abandon their homes are civil wars, inter-ethnic strife, and environmental degradation.

The UN Refugee Convention and its later protocols guarantee certain rights to refugees, including education for their children, access to public services, housing, and work. They cannot be returned to their countries of origin until they are able to do so in safety. As speakers of the International Language Esperanto we are particularly sensitive to the need to provide refugees with language services and help in language learning, so that they can exercise these rights.

We are also mindful of the fact that the UN's Sustainable Development Goals are designed to reduce poverty, strengthen education, improve human rights, and create a livable environment. We both support services for those forced out of their countries and also encourage the creation of an environment of peace everywhere in the world.

On June 13, the UN began its annual countdown to the International Day of Peace on September 21. A peaceful world would be a world without refugees – a world in which people could move freely and without constraint, and a world in which tolerance and understanding would prevail. We are capable of creating such a world, if we have the will to do so. The Esperanto movement stands behind the United Nations in its efforts to alleviate human distress and to create a world of peace and understanding.

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