

# Declaration on the occasion of the International Day of Education, 24 January 2020

Nelson Mandela: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

The Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) joins with the International League of Esperanto-speaking Teachers (ILEI) in congratulating the United Nations and UNESCO on the progress that they have made, in co-operation with their Member-States and with non-governmental organizations and civil society, in expanding the reach and the quality of education worldwide. The fourth Sustainable Development Goal calls for quality education for all, with universal pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, and equal access to higher education. It calls for the enhancement of work skills, gender equality, universal literacy (including among the adult population), and education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

Data from the United Nations and UNESCO indicate rising rates of literacy worldwide, rising rates of school attendance, and progress in women's education. But there are many children and young adults who are left behind and thereby denied the ability to make a living and to participate fully in democratic processes. And far too many children are denied the opportunity to develop the values of tolerance, understanding and openness that will assure peace and co-operation in the years ahead.

Despite considerable progress, many millions of boys and girls (particularly girls) are not in school, many lack the skills to earn a decent living, illiteracy is widespread among the adult population, there are insufficient teachers, and little consideration is given to educating young people about their responsibilities as world citizens. Language is often a problem: even those children who are in school are often forced to learn in a language other than their own, which slows down their progress; and few children are given the skills and opportunities to communicate with people across the world on a basis of equality, either by learning their languages or by learning the International Language Esperanto.

The International League of Esperanto-speaking Teachers ILEI, working in the International Language Esperanto and liaising with teachers across the world, helps to support the work of teachers, to strengthen their skills, and to give them a clear and complete picture of the aims and activities of the UN and UNESCO in the area of education for all.

ILEI's use of the International Language Esperanto allows for exchanges among specialists and educators from many different countries. The work of teachers in today's world is not easy; for this reason, international contacts, the transfer of knowledge and examples of effective strategies are particularly valuable and stimulating for teachers.

ILEI and UEA, the Universal Esperanto Association, regularly inform their members about the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets as they relate to education, and about the importance of building fully-equipped schools in developing countries. Textbooks and instructional materials are purchased and circulated through the Esperanto movement, along with financial help in the building of schools, the drilling of wells, and the provision of other necessities. Exchanges between continents are frequent. The Esperantist-sponsored NGO Knowledge Without Borders offers, in Cotonou, Benin, courses for young university-eligible women along three axes: leadership training, reading and writing in the Fon language, and Esperanto; these courses are much appreciated by participants. In such activities the Esperanto movement works in parallel with UN and UNESCO.

UEA and ILEI urge on their members the need to use their competence in the International Language Esperanto to assert the importance of international understanding and co-operation among all people and to help inculcate those values in the consciousness of their colleagues and of citizens everywhere.

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