

# Message on the Occasion of the International Day of Families 2018

8 March 2018.



The theme of this year's International Day of Families is "Families and inclusive societies." On behalf of the thousands of Esperanto-speaking families it has welcomed into its ranks over the years, the Universal Esperanto Association expresses its enduring commitment to social inclusion for all family members, protection of their human rights, and assistance to all across the world who, in the spirit of Sustainable Development Goal 16, "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions," seek help from the international community in coping with displacement, war, extreme poverty, and disease. Many such families are hindered from expressing their needs by language barriers, lack of access to education, and social marginalization.

Ever since its founding in 1908, our Association has striven to bridge the divides between people and nations. Not infrequently, these activities have led to international marriages and the founding of families whose children are at home in more than one culture. One hundred years ago, in the midst of World War I, the young Association worked, from its headquarters in neutral Switzerland, to use the International Language Esperanto as a means of reuniting families divided by war, and to establish contact with family members isolated from their loved ones. In peacetime, we have sought to spread the learning and teaching of Esperanto as a way of opening up the world to children, adults and older persons alike; for families of all kinds, it represents a unique way of participating in an international community linked by travel, literature, and other shared experiences. Today the Association organizes an annual global gathering of Esperanto-speaking children, and our affiliates arrange meetings for Esperanto-speaking families in several countries each year. The theme of this International Day of Families is thus timely and relevant for the international challenges that our members seek to address around the world through the Sustainable Development Goals.

On this day, in a world in which far too many families are divided or displaced by war and political oppression, far too many families are living in poverty or beset by disease, and far too many families are vainly seeking a better balance between work and family, we express our determination, on behalf of all speakers of Esperanto, to work for a healthier, more egalitarian, more tolerant, and more peaceful world in which family life is strengthened in a way that benefits all families and all individual family members.

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