

Universal Esperanto Association: Message to the United Nations and to UNESCO on the occasion of International Women's Day, 8 March 2021



Universala Esperanto-Asocio

Every year, the Universal Esperanto Association enthusiastically participates in the celebration of International Women's Day. This day is an occasion to assess the progress made in removing discrimination against women and girls, and insisting on their equal rights. It is also an occasion to consider the long road to equality that is still to be travelled.

The health crisis generated by COVID-19 has had its particular effect on women, who have been hit from several directions, among them economic, work-related and family-related. The pandemic has increased existing inequalities and runs the risk of undermining, at least in part, the progress made in recent decades towards gender equality.

The corona virus crisis has highlighted the unequal burdens borne by women, and their vulnerability to various forms of discrimination and violence. At the same time it has revealed their strength and their essential role in society. Women have stood out as some of the most exemplary and effective national leaders against the pandemic. Local women's rights organizations, women's groups and transnational feminist movements have not ceased their work, have forcefully reacted to the crisis, and have in some countries achieved historic successes.

Also in the Esperanto movement the need for equality is felt ever more strongly, and has become a central topic in online discussions, working groups, lectures, projects. Particularly among young people, women leaders and activists have stood out for their ability to work as teams and as engines of change.

On this International Women's Day, we recognize their highly valued contribution and at the same time our need to work still harder to overcome the abiding numeric disproportion of genders in our movement and to create an inclusive culture. From its earliest history, the Esperanto movement has aimed to be a place where "people meet people," come to know one another, learn from one another – beyond national boundaries and language barriers. In this quest for diversity, the dimension of gender must on no account be forgotten.

The International Language Esperanto presents a unique opportunity for a truly worldwide dialogue on the way ahead – a dialogue through a single worldwide language, touching all countries and continents, and directly contributing to an open and inclusive debate that directly engages global civil society – a debate that is central to the mission of the United Nations.