

Esperanto and the UN

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Universala Esperanto-Asocio

Esperanto movement stresses the importance of the mother tongue

Almost since its inception, UNESCO has emphasized the importance of educating children in their mother tongue whenever possible – and in a language that they readily understand if not. But official education policies in many countries pay little attention to this ideal, thereby setting back the learning of their minorities. This was the thrust of the Universal Esperanto Association's message to the United Nations and UNESCO on the occasion of Mother Language Day, February 21, 2021.

“The goal of a quality education for all – number four of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals – requires an atmosphere of trust and support by all parties: teachers, students, politicians, and official education authorities,” the message stated. “Such an atmosphere in turn requires that students have the optimal conditions in which to learn. First and foremost, that means learning in a language that they fully understand – namely their mother tongue.”

“The United Nations has proclaimed the year 2021 the International Year of Peace and Trust,” UEA pointed out. “A good place to begin with such an effort is schools.”

“In many countries and circumstances children are not taught in their own languages and little is done to help them transition into the language of instruction. This often puts them at a permanent disadvantage, negating the benefits of schooling, of competent teaching, and of investment in educational infrastructure. By not teaching young people in a language they fully understand, we are throwing away money and, with it, promising lives,” the message warned.

The Association also stressed the importance of engaging parents: “At this time, in a time of pandemic, it is especially important that the schooling of children include their parents as partners in education – and that may well require education in the mother tongue, in a language that parents and children share as part of their heritage.” Education, particularly in early childhood, should be a family affair.

“UEA believes in education for all, through languages they comprehend, in linguistic justice in all its aspects, and in a world made more peaceful through education and understanding,” the message concluded. “We call on the United Nations, UNESCO, and all those working for a sustainable world, to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the knowledge, equality, justice and opportunity that such an achievement would bring with it.”



Internacia
TAGO de la
GEPATRA
LINGVO

21-a de februaro 2021




Per la uzo de la internacia lingvo **Esperanto** oni respektas la lingvan kaj kulturajn diversecon de ĉiu homo.

Pri lingvoj: www.lingvo.info
Pri interreta komunikado: www.esperanto.net | www.uea.org



Mother Language Day was widely celebrated in the Esperanto movement, with special posters in numerous languages, contact with ministries of education, and strong support among Esperanto-speaking teachers.

“We strongly favour efforts to put education in the hands of those who care about our children most,” said Prof. Humphrey Tonkin, representative of the Universal Esperanto Association to the United Nations. “We consider our cooperation with UNESCO and the United Nations in this effort as an important part of building a better and sustainable world in the future.” Prof. Tonkin praised UNESCO for recognizing that through the International Language Esperanto they can reach audiences that have been hard to reach in the past, as is evident from the publication of the Esperanto edition of the UNESCO Courier and also a recent history of UNESCO in Esperanto.

Final Report of MondaFest’ 2020 published

The pandemic interrupted the 115-years-old history of the annual World Congresses of Esperanto, but not the enthusiasm of Esperanto speakers. Denied the possibility of meeting in Montreal in early August of last year, UEA took to the internet, with a three-month World Festival of Esperanto drawing an audience of thousands of Esperanto speakers from as many as 100 countries. As a result, sustainable development, the main theme for the year, drew more attention than ever. UEA recently filed its final report on the Festival with the United Nations and UNESCO (<http://esperantoporun.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MondaFest-Raporto-por-UN-English-2.pdf>). The festival was also the occasion of publication of a 100-page guide to the Sustainable Development Goals in Esperanto: <http://esperantoporun.org/en/publications/>

Esperanto speakers find their voices

Human Rights. The past several months have seen a flurry of activity among Esperanto speakers and at the Universal Esperanto Association. UEA spoke out on Human Rights Day, December 10, 2020, firmly and urgently. While noting the achievements of the UN in the field of human rights, it stressed the need for new approaches: “Yet the old problems, which have plagued the international community for years, continue to haunt us. One of them is an inability to achieve the mutual understanding that is needed to confront the world’s many difficulties and to apply the solutions that scientists and philosophers make available to us. A second is a failure to draw the ordinary people across the world into that global dialogue. We believe that the United Nations needs a more forward-looking language policy, designed to enlarge and enrich world dialogue, and to give to the peoples of the world the voices that are their human right.”

Education. Esperanto speakers chose International Education Day, 24 January, as the occasion to speak out on the communications revolution and to stress the importance of bringing better educational services to parts of the African continent, including those where Esperanto is gaining more and more interest: “Even before the revolution in communications, Africans expressed the wish that basic information be available in Esperanto, in all fields, ‘so that we could have access to knowledge without using the colonial languages.’ This is now possible through Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, which was twenty years old on January 15, 2021. The version of Wikipedia in Esperanto now has more than 290,000 articles; thus, little by little, this desire of Africans is being realized. At the same time, a working group on Esperanto in universities is exploring new ways of using Esperanto as a language for university learning and instruction.” TEJO, the World Esperanto Youth Organization, and ILEI, the International League of Esperanto-speaking Teachers, joined the UEA in this joint statement.

The Holocaust. On Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, Esperanto speakers mourned those who lost their lives, particularly Esperantists and internationalists – and it honoured those who risked their own lives by harbouring Jewish Esperantists: “The Esperanto movement mourns particularly those believers in internationalism and international understanding who, either because of their race or physical condition or because of their political or social convictions, perished at the hands of the Nazis. They included numerous Esperantists in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. They included Esperantist civil servants, teachers, doctors, journalists, poets. And among the survivors were also Esperantist heroes who shielded others from extermination... Polish historian Zofia Banet-Fornalowa has memorialised some of the best known of Hitler’s Esperanto-speaking victims, and German historian Ulrich Lins, in his book *Dangerous Language*, has given us some sense of the extent of the murders, but many others died largely unknown and too easily forgotten.”

Women. “The corona virus crisis has highlighted the unequal burdens borne by women, and their vulnerability to various forms of discrimination and violence.” So stated a declaration published by the Universal Esperanto Association on the occasion of International Women’s Day, March 8. “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.” The International Language Esperanto, the statement added, “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.”

World Health Organization offers Esperanto-language course

“Introduction to COVID-19: Methods for detection, prevention, response and control” is the title of an online, self-paced course published by the World Health Organization. With the help of the Universal Medical Esperanto Association, an organization with over a hundred years of international activity, the World Health Organization is offering an Esperanto version of the course:

<https://openwho.org/courses/enkonduko-al-KOVIM-19>

UNESCO Courier in Esperanto: Latest issue

The January-March issue of *UNESKO-kuriero*, the Esperanto edition of UNESCO’s journal, features SDG-14, the oceans – with articles on exploring the ocean floor in China, the war on plastic in Latin America, coastal erosion in Ghana, and numerous other topics. It is available for download at:

<https://idiomaesperanto.weebly.com/unesko-kuriero.html>

Universal Esperanto Association Office for Liaison with the United Nations, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017. [1] 212-687-7041. www.esperantoporun.org.