



Building the Future *NOW*

Message of the Universal Esperanto Association on World Children's Day 2021

The United Nations Children's Fund was created in 1946, early in the history of the UN. This year it celebrates its 75th anniversary. Its vibrant and effective intervention to protect children across the world reminds us how important it is to protect the rights of children everywhere, and how important the role of the UN is in that protection.

Every child has the right to enjoy basic services and to benefit from opportunities for full development. Protection and care for children is a universal basis for peace, human rights, and sustainable development.

Early on, in 1954, World Children's Day was declared. Later, in 1959, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and in 1989 the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These documents propose guidelines to the states that make children a first priority.

The UNICEF Report for 2021, the State of the World's Children – *On My Mind: Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health* – focuses on the mental health of children and adolescents. In countries rich and poor, psychic disorders, and their lack of recognition, afflict children and youth. Some 13% of adolescents aged 10-19 live with diagnosed mental illness.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, around one in five young people said that they already experienced depression. And the pandemic has increased feelings of uncertainty, loneliness and unhappiness. For these reasons, governments must invest more strongly in the mental health of young people.

Through Esperanto, the Universal Esperanto Association and the Esperanto youth organization TEJO encourage friendship and understanding among young people of the whole world. Through Esperanto, young people can participate in volunteer work; meet to talk about their lives, studies and challenges; work in international organizations; and much more. Practising a single international language independent of individual nationalities, they join an authentically worldwide movement where they can learn and practise principles of internationalism, globalism, and working together to create a better world.

Through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations proclaimed that children are entitled to special protection and assistance. Children and youth represent the future, but we must build that future now, through protection and observance of children's rights.