



Message of the Universal Esperanto Association to the United Nations and UNESCO on the occasion of International Mother Language Day, 21 February 2022

On International Mother Language Day, the Universal Esperanto Association celebrates the cultural and linguistic diversity of the world. This diversity is a treasure that we must protect and advance. Respect for linguistic diversity is a means for the full observance of human rights.

The year 2022 marks the beginning of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032, which is also the topic of the 107th World Congress of Esperanto in Montreal, Canada, in August 2022. With the theme *Language, Life, Earth: The Decade of Indigenous Languages*, participants from dozens of countries will discuss the situation of indigenous communities and their languages. Through the international language Esperanto we encourage worldwide dialogue and co-operation for the conservation, revival and advancement of indigenous languages.

Language lies at the heart of identity, communication, social integration, education and development. The most comprehensive use of languages can be a path to inclusion, so that no one is left behind. In this sense, education in the mother tongue is important, particularly for young children, so that they have the best foundation for ongoing learning.

The mother tongue should form the foundation of education on which other languages can be acquired to function locally, nationally, and internationally. In this regard, the international language Esperanto opens doors to a fully international community covering the entire world.

Lack of linguistic access hinders the goal of delivering quality education for all by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goal 4). Multilingualism permitting as widespread a use of mother tongues as possible is a way of strengthening education and allowing the full development of the individual. Of course, education faces other challenges too, such as guaranteeing access to schools for all children and good conditions for teachers. However, the language question is ever present, and it is a serious error to give it no attention.

We welcome UNESCO's 2022 topic for Mother Language Day, *"Using technology for multilingual learning: Challenges and opportunities"*. Technology can advance multilingual education and the quality of general education. However, the language divide increases the digital divide. We need multilingual technology for multilingual education in a multilingual world.

The Esperanto-speaking community respects and supports linguistic and cultural diversity across the world and the use of mother languages in education everywhere.