

# Esperanto and the UN

Newsletter of the Universal Esperanto Association's  
Office of Liaison with the United Nations

Number 57, March-April 2022



Universala Esperanto-Asocio

## International Mother Language Day 2022: Celebrating the cultural and linguistic diversity of the world



February 21, 2022, International Mother Language Day, was the occasion for the Universal Esperanto Association to give particular attention to the efforts of the United Nations and UNESCO to “celebrate the cultural and linguistic diversity of the world.” The Association’s message to the UN and UNESCO on this special observance of the UN praised linguistic diversity as “a treasure that we must protect and advance.” Respect for linguistic diversity “is a means for the full observance of human rights.”

In its message UEA drew particular attention to indigenous languages and the Association’s plans in this regard: “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.”

As the message points out, “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 ... 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.”

Furthermore, “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.”

If elementary education in the mother tongue is important to allow all young people equal opportunity to learn how to learn, unimpeded by language barriers, it is equally important to build bridges between languages. As the Universal Esperanto Association points out, the encouragement of local languages should be matched by efforts to cultivate means of worldwide communication, such as the international language Esperanto, that are also based on equity and ease of access. Equality of access to education should be matched by equality of international communication.

## **Never again: UEA mourns the Holocaust**

On the occasion of Holocaust Remembrance Day, 27 January, in a message to the United Nations our Association mourned “the millions who lost their lives” and honoured “those brave individuals who helped save the lives of others who would have perished.”

The Universal Esperanto Association mourned particularly the thousands of speakers of Esperanto who died: they were “civil servants, teachers, doctors, journalists, working people – individuals from all walks of life.” Among them were family members of Ludwik Lazarus Zamenhof who in 1887 created Esperanto. “His son Adam was arrested and, early in 1940, shot; in 1942 his daughters Zofia and Lidia were murdered in Treblinka, along with his sister Ida. Only Adam’s son, Ludwik, miraculously survived, thanks not only to his own ingenuity but also to the protection afforded him and his mother by Father Marcelli Godlewski, of the Parish of All Saints in Grzybowski Square, Warsaw. Father Godlewski, and others like him, thus helped keep alive the hope that is contained in the very name of Esperanto.”

In the year 2022, UEA has decided to particularly remember L.L. Zamenhof’s daughter Lidia, murdered in 1942 in the death factory of Treblinka: “Lidia Zamenhof was active internationally in spreading her father’s language and ideas, especially ‘Homaranismo’, Zamenhof’s ideology of humanist universalism... Nazi Germany persecuted Esperanto both because its creator was Jewish and also because of the global and human rights ideals of the Esperanto movement. During a stay in the USA to propagate both the language and her Bahai faith, Lidia’s application to extend her visa was refused by the US immigration authorities and she was obliged to return to Poland. Soon thereafter, following the invasion of Poland in September 1939, Lidia was accused of spreading anti-Nazi propaganda in the US and arrested... To mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death, UEA will hold during 2022 various activities in honour of ‘the daughter of Esperanto’.”

The message explains that “The Esperanto movement mourns particularly those 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 speakers of Esperanto in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. They were civil servants, teachers, doctors, journalists, working people – individuals from all walks of life. And among the survivors were also Esperantist heroes who shielded others from extermination.”

“We pledge, with the example of the Holocaust before us, to do our best to resist injustice wherever and whenever it occurs.”

## Esperanto youth confronts sexism

The study session “X-Language: The effect of sexism in everyday communication,” organized by the Esperanto youth organization TEJO in collaboration with the Council of Europe, recently took place in person at the European Youth Centre in Budapest (EYCB). In all, 26 participants came together, met one another, and explored their assumptions through team-building exercises. A week full of learning and practical knowledge followed. The event was originally planned for September 2020 but was delayed by the difficult situation surrounding COVID-19. The event took place entirely in Esperanto.

## Joint message on education calls for mother-language education and use of Esperanto

The Universal Esperanto Association, along with the International League of Esperantist Teachers (ILEI) and the World Esperanto Youth Organization (TEJO) sent a message to UNESCO and the United Nations

on the occasion of the International Day of Education, January 24.

On the one hand they praised the UN and UNESCO for their achievements in the field of education, and on the other hand warned that the road is long and difficult: “Despite the commendable efforts of UNESCO and other international organizations, the path to a sound and equitable education remains blocked for millions of young people across the world. In 2018, some 260 million school-age children were not in school – and in April 2020, as COVID-19 raged, that number temporarily jumped to 1.6 billion.”



“If all the world’s children received a quality education in languages they readily understood and with access to modern technology, our ability to address world problems would vastly increase, our reserves of human capital would be far higher, and the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals would be much closer to realization.”

“The Esperanto movement strongly supports quality education for all, including lifelong learning. Our movement brings people together, virtually and in person, through the International Language Esperanto from well over a hundred countries across the world. Many speakers of Esperanto are teachers, and many are young people who believe that international co-operation is the key to the betterment of humankind and who communicate with one another in a single language in an international setting.”

## Esperanto speaker assumes presidency in Catalan language academy

Nicolau Dols Salas, an Esperanto speaker born in Majorca, will be the new president of the Philological Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, considered the Academy of the Catalan Language. Nicolau Dols is a professor at the University of the Balearic Islands and a visiting professor in the Graduate Interlinguistics Programme at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland. In July 2018 he was joint chair of the symposium on the cultural heritage of Esperanto organized at the 51<sup>st</sup> Congress of the International League of Esperanto-speaking Teachers (ILEI) in cooperation with the National Extension University (UNED) and the Spanish Esperanto Federation.

## Indigenous languages will be the theme of UEA's congress in Montreal

Former president of UEA and professor of education Dr. Mark Fettes will co-ordinate the congress theme at the 107<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Esperanto in Montreal in August, according to a recent announcement. Over the past thirty years Fettes, himself a Canadian, has written and conducted research on the language-policy and educational aspects of indigenous languages.

The theme for the Montreal congress was inspired by the decision of the United Nations and UNESCO to build on their experience in 2019, the International Year of Indigenous Languages, with a common effort extending over ten years. Under the title "Language, Life, Earth: The Decade of Indigenous Languages" UEA will launch its own contribution to the decade (2022-2032). On the one hand, the theme stresses an important aspect of language rights: much as Esperantists oppose the imposition of the languages of larger or stronger peoples on those less strong, they also tend to support the efforts of various peoples to re-evaluate and further develop their own languages. But, on the other hand, the theme has a second important aspect: the contribution of indigenous languages to our understanding of sustainable development and the rebuilding of peaceful human relations with the Earth.

"In Montreal our congress attendees will have the opportunity to discover individual and fascinating languages like Inuktitut, Anishnabemowin and Mohawk, and also learn about the integration of indigenous languages in the complex linguistic and political landscape of Canada," Fettes explains in his introductory presentation of the topic in UEA's journal *Esperanto*. "But we will also look at a fresh translation of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, discuss the significance of indigenous languages for the Sustainable Development Goals, and consider what contemporary indigenous writers and thinkers have to say about the development of human societies."