

Esperanto and the UN

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Universala Esperanto-Asocio

World Congress of Esperanto meets in Montreal, publishes declaration on indigenous languages



The International Decade on Indigenous Languages formed the main theme of this year's World Esperanto Congress. Representatives from some fifty countries attended the event, which concluded with a Declaration forwarded to UNESCO and the United Nations, as follows:

The 746 participants in the 107th World Esperanto Congress, which convened in Montreal, Canada, from August 6 to 13, 2022, addressed as our central theme "Language, life, land: The Decade of Indigenous Languages." In a territorial acknowledgment in the opening ceremony of the Congress, we expressed our deep gratitude to the various Indigenous nations, in particular the Kanien'kehá:ka or Mohawk people, who have never ceded their rights to the territory where our meeting took place.

By means of talks, films, discussion sessions, and also a course in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe), we learned about the great diversity of Indigenous languages and cultures in North America and around the world. We saw how Indigenous peoples play an important role in the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity, and are the bearers of foundational knowledge for our ability to live sustainably upon the Earth. We also heard how, in spite of many obstacles and attacks on their rights, those peoples are organizing in order to maintain their traditional occupations, safeguard their cultural practices, and assert their rights to their lands.

To mark the start of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-203), our Congress published a new Esperanto translation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Among the many rights recognized in that document, we draw particular attention to Article 13, according to which "Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons." As a movement for language rights, we express our strong support for those principles.

The speakers of Esperanto have high regard for the value of cultural and linguistic diversity and are committed to working with others to bring about language democracy on a global scale. In alignment with those goals and with the information and ideas shared in this Congress, we declare our solidarity with and support for Indigenous peoples in their ongoing struggles for self-determination, peace, justice, and mutual understanding.

Next year's Congress will take place in Torino, Italy, from 29 July to 5 August 2023.

Duolingo broadens Esperanto offerings

Every year some 700,000 people learn Esperanto through Duolingo, which offers courses for English, Spanish and Portuguese speakers. Recently a course for French speakers has been added.

<https://www.duolingo.com/course/eo/zh>

Language and friendship for peace

By happy coincidence, Esperanto Day and International Friendship Day take place within a few days of one another, on July 26 and July 30 respectively. UEA noted as much with special messages drawing attention to the fact that “speaking the same language does not necessarily bring peace, but linking it with friendship offers peace the best chance. That is why Esperanto speakers use their language to promote friendship across the world.”

Our Association has for many years worked for “a world where its peoples could freely know and communicate with one another on a neutral basis. For this reason it is important “to work hard to cultivate friendship on a worldwide scale – so that we can tackle the problems that the world faces and seize the opportunities that can improve the state of the globe and all its inhabitants”.

“In a recent resolution, the UN General Assembly again emphasized the importance of multilingualism and respect for the world’s languages. It is not enough to *instruct* the world through the large languages: it’s essential to *listen* to the voices of even the smallest languages. There is a role for Esperanto here, as a link among all the languages of the world.”

The spirit of Esperanto at the United Nations

In a dialogue with the President-elect of the upcoming 77th Session of the UN General Assembly, Ambassador Csaba Kőrösi, UEA raised a question about multilingualism. UEA’s representative, Prof. Francis M. Hult, reminded the meeting that multilingualism is a fundamental value of the UN and a key element in cooperation and problem-solving. Languages are important in furthering solidarity and unity, and for this reason we must advance multilingualism in the everyday work of the General Assembly and the entire UN community.

Ambassador Kőrösi welcomed Hult’s comments and mentioned an Esperanto friend who regularly reminds him of the importance of Esperanto in peacebuilding and mutual understanding. He invited Esperanto speakers to assist with advice on how the spirit of Esperanto in bringing together different people, different communities and different ideas could improve the work of the General Assembly.

Putting SDG 4 Back on Track After COVID-19: The Essential Role of Multilingualism in Education

The NGO Committee on Language and Languages, the Universal Esperanto Association, and the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations, along with the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations, came together to organize a side event at the UN High-Level Political Forum on July 11. Leading specialists on education discussed the practical significance of a multilingual approach to SDG 4. Drawing on empirical research and documented best practices, they demonstrated how schools can cultivate multilingual resources, including mother tongues, world languages, national and regional languages, indigenous languages, and international languages like Esperanto, to achieve inclusive and equitable education that empowers students as global citizens prepared for participation in social economic, and political life.

This well-attended event focused particularly on recommendations for the role of languages in education put forth in *Reimagining Our Futures Together*, UNESCO's report on the Futures of Education Initiative.

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