

Esperanto and the UN

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Universala Esperanto-Asocio

Universal Esperanto Association to hold virtual congress emphasizing Indigenous languages

As early as 1905, the speakers of Esperanto began meeting every year in an international congress. These congresses generally attracted one or two thousand people from some fifty countries. The congress planned for Paris in 1914 did not take place because of World War I and the sequence of congresses was again interrupted by World War II – and then again by the recent pandemic. During the pandemic, UEA assembled highly successful virtual congresses. After two years without an in-person congress, the Esperantists once again met in person in 2022, in Montreal.

But UEA has decided to continue virtual congresses for those who cannot travel to “normal” congresses: the next will take place this November 24-27: <https://vk.esperanto.net>. The principal theme will be the same as in Montreal: the Decade of Indigenous Languages. The Association particularly appreciates this UNESCO programme, which is devoting attention to linguistic diversity and the need to include in worldwide decision-making also the Indigenous peoples of the world.

If the model succeeds, it may become a regular feature of the calendar, supplementing the customary “in-person” congresses. The next in-person congress will be in August 2023 in Torino, Italy.

UEA calls for “peace, justice and social progress” – and language equality, on United Nations Day

“Seventy-seven years ago, following the horrors of the Second World War, fifty-one nations ratified the Charter of the United Nations, thus creating the largest and most truly worldwide organization, the most ambitious diplomatic effort for international peace. The UN, now consisting of 193 Member States, has become the most important forum to address worldwide affairs.”

Thus began UEA's 2022 message on the occasion of United Nations Day (October 24) – a message distributed throughout the world through the Association's communications network. Drawing attention to the current world situation, the message declared: “As the President of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Csaba Kőrösi, has said, we need solutions attained through solidarity, sustainability and science. We need to build on those things that unite us, and build trust.”

“The UN is not a governing body, but a convener,” the message states. It speaks to the values expressed in the UN Charter: “peace, justice and social progress” and declares that “the world (that is, all of us and the natural world in which we live) needs a renewed decisiveness by governments to realise these goals.” It points out that “the Universal Esperanto Association, from its foundation in 1908, has worked and continues to work to show the importance of the linguistic side of efforts to achieve international understanding... We support linguistic justice, so that everyone will be heard in decisions about the future of humankind.”

The various national Esperanto associations, local groups and specialized associations gave special recognition to UN Day with special activities and information campaigns.

Association pays particular attention to language workers

On the occasion of International Translation Day (September 30), UEA sent special greetings to “all language professionals and all those who seek to facilitate linguistic understanding and interpersonal communication. Translation helps bring people together and allows for the exchange of humanitarian and cultural values among languages and cultures across the whole world.”

UEA is known across the world as a convener of speakers of the International Language Esperanto, but is less well-known as an activist in the broader campaign to facilitate international linguistic communication by all possible means. “Through translation we can advance openness to peace and trust, and against injustice, intolerance and censorship. Through translation we create the means for worldwide dialogue.” Such was UEA’s message on Translation Day.

The message continued: “We must also work for the equal treatment of all languages, even the smallest – because everyone has a right to equal treatment, a right to free expression, and a right to be heard. Full and inclusive worldwide cooperation is a necessity for the building of a world of full human rights, peace and development for all. Dialogue on the basis of justice and equality is the way. And that includes linguistic equality.”

Deguchi Prize for 2022 honors a fervent worker for peace and against nuclear weapons

UEA established the Onisaburo Deguchi [Prize](#) in Esperanto’s Centennial Year, 1987. The prize honours activists who have, over an extended period, used Esperanto to work for world peace and human happiness in line with the ideas of Dr Zamenhof and the teachings of the Japanese religious leader Onisaburo Deguchi. In accordance with the ideas of Zamenhof and Deguchi, the prize is intended to honour those who have most contributed to UEA’s basic goals. To date, 28 individuals and seven groups have received the prize. The present honouree is the 29th.

By decision of the UEA's executive committee, the Deguchi Prize for 2022 has been awarded to Osioka Taeko. Osioka Taeko was born on November 21, 1948, in Hiroshima, Japan, and is active in that city. She is an Esperanto speaker and an activist for peace, women's affairs, and human rights – and against nuclear arms.

For decades she has worked for Esperanto and peace. A supporter of the Japanese Esperanto Institute (JEI), she has several times embarked on world voyages as a member of a Japanese peace delegation whose special exhibitions on Hiroshima aim to perpetuate the memory of the atom bomb and to advocate its abolition. With her husband (Osioka Moritaka, also active in JEI) she created the Hiroshima Esperanto Centre.

As a specialist on the atom bomb, in 2018 she published a [book](https://katalogo.uea.org/katalogo.php?inf=78) (katalogo.uea.org/katalogo.php?inf=78) on the subject. In 2020 she lectured at the World Esperanto Festival and presented the virtual [Hiroshima-Nagasaki Exhibition: 75 Years for Peace](#), marking the 75th anniversary of the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Her [lecture](#) presented her research on a Korea-born survivor of the bombing. In 2021 she chaired the local organizing committee for the 108th Japanese Esperanto Congress in Hiroshima, which had to take place virtually because of the pandemic. As congress topic she chose, along with the committee, "The spirits of Hiroshima unite the world."

Professionally, Osioka Taeko worked as an elementary school teacher. She now serves as a guide in Hiroshima's Peace Park, where she explains to tourists and other visitors the events of August 6, 1945, when the first atomic bomb fell on the city of Hiroshima. She plays an important role in the Hiroshima peace movement, collecting signatures to support nuclear disarmament.

International Esperanto chorus works with the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee on a festival for peace

Partner organizations with UNESCO have in various years organized events on International Peace Day (21 September). In 2019, Michel Thouzeau, a peace movement leader and initiator of the idea, proposed that Esperanto be one of four working languages (along with English, French and Spanish) in an event planned for 2020, in which choruses from across the world would sing for peace and a film would be created showing their various performances. Esperanto speakers made a notable contribution to this film: <https://youtu.be/ZF4o-ZmOdgQ>.

There followed a new event in Tolosa, in the Basque Country in Spain, at the invitation of TOPIC, an organization representing UNIMA, the international organization of puppet theatres, at UNESCO. This in-person event, initially planned for 2020, was postponed to 2022 (17 September) because of the pandemic. Six professional choruses from the six continents were invited, and Zdravka Boytcheva suggested adding an International Chorus with singers from many countries who would sing in Esperanto. The International Chorus, which performed thanks to the financial support of, among others, the Universal Esperanto Association and Pangeo: Engineering for Peace, consisted of some twenty singers from twelve countries in Europe and the Americas, and was ultimately one of four participating

choruses: the others came from Colombia, Madrid and the Basque Country. The chorus (and therefore UEA) was represented in a morning panel discussion on “Peace, the Arts and Youth” by Linda Le Nepveu. During the day, the choruses sang in three major squares in the city, and during the evening in the city theatre. They also came together to sing “Zatoz”, specially composed by the well-known Basque composer Josu Elberdin. Provides films of the panel discussion and the evening concert, along with additional photos, can be found on the event’s website <https://www.bakea.eus>. The Esperanto chorus is working on a further film of the open-air presentations.

The event has strengthened UEA’s links with the NGO Liaison Committee. The Committee’s chair, Davide Grosso, of the International Music Council, has agreed to join the Honorary Committee of next year’s World Congress of Esperanto, in Turin, Italy. UEA has also been invited to contribute to the 13th UNESCO Forum (<https://ngo-unesco.net/mobilising-ngos-2022>) taking place on 21 and 22 November in Ottawa, Canada, on Indigenous languages (Prof. Mark Fettes, former UEA president and specialist on Indigenous education, will speak).

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