

Esperanto and the UN

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UEA plays key role in meeting on multilingualism with UN leaders

Building Common Understanding through Multilingualism was the theme of a 12 June meeting on multilingualism and the UN. In attendance were, among others, the president of the General Assembly, the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, and the Under-Secretary-General for Policy. The meeting, which took place virtually, grew out of a growing awareness of the need to strengthen the UN's language readiness if it is to reach its various publics and to reduce language discrimination within the organization.

Organized on the initiative of the NGO Committee on Language and Languages, a substantive committee of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (also known as CoNGO), and the Study Group on Language and the United Nations, an academic network of researchers who specialize in multilingualism, the meeting was sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Andorra, Burundi, Canada, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, and Spain, and the Permanent Observer Mission for the International Organization of La Francophonie.

Speaking for the Universal Esperanto Association, Dr. Humphrey Tonkin stressed the importance of reaching civil society in languages that the public understands, and listening to their concerns in languages they are comfortable with. The SDGs (the Sustainable Development Goals) pay little attention to language, he said; but language is vital in forming the partnerships needed to reach the goals.

The meeting was itself multilingual, with simultaneous interpreting in the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish), plus Esperanto. UEA coordinated the provision of interpreting in Esperanto. The session was moderated by Professor Francis M. Hult, chair of the NGO Committee on Languages and a representative of UEA to the UN.

Among the speakers were top leaders of the United Nations, most notably Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the 77th General Assembly. Other senior leaders who made remarks were Movses Abelian, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and Coordinator for Multilingualism; Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and UN Legal Counsel; Guy Ryder, Under-Secretary-General for Policy; and Lisa M. Buttenheim, Assistant Secretary-General for Support Operations.

Several Ambassadors to the UN addressed the meeting: Sofia Margaryan, Adviser for Humanitarian Affairs, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia; Zéphyrin Maniratanga, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Burundi; Robert Keith Rae, Permanent Representative of Canada; Yuri Ariel Gala López, Deputy Permanent Representative of Cuba; Mohamed Siad Doualeh, Permanent Representative of the

Republic of Djibouti; Anatolio Ndong Mba, Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea; Ana Paula Zacarias, Permanent Representative of Portugal; Ana Jimenez de la Hoz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Spain; and Ifigeneia Kontoleontos, Permanent Observer of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Liberato Bautista, president of the Conference of NGOs, CoNGO, sent remarks.

Additional speakers included staff members from the United Nations Office at Geneva's Multilingual Action Team and the UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office in Bangkok as well as representatives of civil society organizations and scientific experts. Civil society representatives Professor Tonkin of UEA and Rev. Hans Becklin of TEJO along with scientific expert Mark Fettes of the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems and Simon Fraser University delivered their remarks in Esperanto, with Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Spanish used by other speakers.

The meeting marks the most robust use of Esperanto during a meeting with leaders and stakeholders of the United Nations to date. As such, it is also a moment of success for UEA's strategy to advance the practice of multilingualism at the United Nations by opening the door for the use of multiple languages, including Esperanto, to engage with a broader global perspective, which was also the main theme of the meeting. Together, the speakers discussed how multilingualism enhances international cooperation, facilitates problem-solving, and deepens understanding across differences.



Esperanto speakers to hold annual congress in Torino

The north Italian city of Torino will host this year's World Esperanto Congress, focused on the topic "Immigration: Confluence of Human Values". The Congress, the 108th in the series (the first was in France in 1905; the next will be in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2024) will feature the annual meetings of the Association's governing council, theatrical and musical presentations, scholarly lectures, meetings of the Esperanto Academy, and numerous other events. To date, expected attendance exceeds 1100 participants, from sixty-five countries. All sessions will be held in Esperanto. Linked to the congress will be a Conference on Esperanto Studies, and a scholarly symposium, the so-called Nitobe Symposium. The Symposium, to take place in English, Italian and Esperanto, will examine the status of the implementation of language rights in the context of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Congress will run from Saturday, 29 July, to Saturday, 5 August. The Nitobe Symposium will take place at the University of Torino on Friday and Saturday, 28-29 July. Both events will be preceded by Esperanto Day, celebrated across the world on 26 July, the date of the first publication of the language in 1887. Also meeting in Italy following the congress will be the Esperanto youth organization TEJO and the Esperanto teachers' organization ILEI.



UEA honours refugees on Refugee Day

UEA "stands in solidarity with refugees, of all kinds, in all places, and at all times," the Association declared on the occasion of World Refugee Day, 20 June 2023. Its message stressed the rights of refugees, particularly "the right to find safety" – and at the same time the need for understanding and support: "In today's increasingly diverse societies, the ability for mutual understanding is essential to build common goals and at the same time respect difference." The message also emphasized the role of the International Language Esperanto in finding common ground and building common goals, both to accept refugees and to reduce the causes of human displacement.

Addressing migration: A bold agenda for UEA's 2023 Congress

With immigration as a major issue for discussion, UEA's 2023 World Congress has announced an ambitious agenda of information sessions, discussion, and planning. Under the general theme of "Immigration: Confluence of Human Values," the meeting, to take place in Torino from 29 July to 5 August, will consist of eight parts, addressing such questions as the negative causes of migration, particularly climate change and natural disasters on the one hand and violent conflicts on the other, and also economic migration, brought on by poverty and deprivation. Experts in the field will examine the geo-economics of migration, the challenges of assimilation, the positive effects of cultural flows, and the acceptance of refugees in European and African settings.

The sessions will be coordinated by the well-known journalist Thomas Bormann and will include addresses by the distinguished jurist Giuliano Turone (Italy), UEA board member Jérémie Sabiyumva (Burundi), UEA vice-president Amri Wandel (Israel), and numerous others. All sessions will take place in Esperanto.

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