

Esperanto and the UN

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Universala Esperanto-Asocio

UEA greets the United Nations on United Nations Day, 24 October 2023

“At a time when the international order is under serious threat and when the rule of law and the spirit of tolerance are severely challenged, the Universal Esperanto Association, which brings together speakers of Esperanto of all nationalities and cultures and a diversity of political persuasions, salutes the United Nations on United Nations Day 2023.”



With these words the Association opened its message to the UN on United Nations Day 2023. The Association's formal relations with the UN go back to 1954, when the UNESCO General Conference recognized UEA's contributions to international understanding and cultural co-operation. Its 2023 message harks back to the early days of the UN: “When the United Nations was created in 1945, its founders sought to rid the world of the scourge of war. While this objective has yet to be achieved, and while intolerance, ethnic rivalry and economic exploitation continue to threaten the world's well-being and prevent multilateral co-operation in so many ways, the United Nations remains a beacon of hope.”

“It was hope,” the 2023 message adds, “that inspired Ludvik Zamenhof to create Esperanto in 1887 and to imagine a different world of ethnic and racial tolerance. Since that time, Esperanto has developed a worldwide speech community – a community that

aspires to make the world a better place.”

Language is by no means the only issue that hinders international co-operation, but it is an important one: “We understand that overcoming differences of language while recognizing cultural and linguistic diversity is only one element in the promotion of peace, but it is an important one. We pledge our support for all sincere efforts to advance peace, and most particularly the efforts of the United Nations, an organization that has done so much to prevent war in our time, to advance multilateral cooperation, and to remind us of our common responsibility as human beings for the future of our planet.”

“At a time when the world faces existential threats,” the message adds, “the United Nations is more important than ever. We are glad to lend our support and urge everyone to do the same.”

Commenting on the Association's message, UEA's representative to the UN, Professor Humphrey Tonkin, added: "Many of our members live in war zones, or are themselves engaged in military action, or are suffering as a result of hostilities. This is hardly what the world envisaged in 1945, when the UN was set up. We must all of us do more, and do better, to resolve disputes peacefully and to respect one another. We are grateful to the United Nations for what it does, but we must all increase our efforts, and make them more effective."

Esperanto movement mourns the passing of Martti Ahtissari

Martti Ahtissari, former President of Finland, known to Esperantists as Honorary Patron of the 1995 World Esperanto Congress in Tampere, has recently died after a long illness. Revered for his dedication to egalitarianism and fairness, and for his unceasing efforts for the promotion of peace, he was recipient in 2008 of the Nobel Peace Prize. Commenting on his passing, the former president of Ireland Mary Robinson praised him for "his dedicated commitment to resolving conflict and promoting a fairer world." "His wisdom and determination," she added, "should inspire us to redouble our efforts to secure peace in these deeply troubling times."

In August 1995, then Director General of the Universal Esperanto Association Osmo Buller arranged for former presidents of the Association John Wells and Humphrey Tonkin to make the journey to Naantali, the summer residence of the president, to present him with the Zamenhof Prize, the Association's highest honour, awarded to outstanding advocates for international peace. Previous recipients of the prize include Sir Brian Urquhart, principal architect of the United Nations' peacekeeping activities at the time of the UN's foundation, and Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, former Director-General of Unesco, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Journal celebrates one congress, looks forward to another

The October issue of the Universal Esperanto Association's journal looks back at the World Esperanto Congress in Torino in August, which attracted well over one thousand people from all of the world's continents, and forward to the next major event, the 4th Virtual Congress of Esperanto, to take place from November 23 to November 26 this year. Featured in this issue is also a particular tribute to Miora Raveloharison, of Madagascar, winner of this year's Deguchi Prize for her work for international peace. Profiles of four additional honorees are also included: Katalin Kovats (Netherlands), Anna Löwenstein (UK), and Privas Tchikpe (Benin), named honorary members by UEA's governing committee, and Renato Corsetti, former president of the Association, named honorary president. Also in this issue are reports on the 2023 conferences of Esperanto teachers and of Esperanto youth, both of which also took place in Italy in August. Next year's World Congress, the 109th in the series (the first took place in 1905), will be held in August in Arusha, Tanzania.