

Esperanto and the UN

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Universala Esperanto-Asocio



Celebrate Esperanto Day, 26 July 2024

Countries have their national holidays, when flags are flown, parades are organized, and national foods are consumed abundantly. We sing songs in our national languages and quote our national writers. We are proud to belong to our nation.

Esperanto is not a nation: the international language Esperanto is spoken by groups of people all over the world. But we do celebrate our special day. Esperanto Day is July 26, the date on which, in the year 1887, the first textbook on Esperanto was published – by Ludwik Zamenhof, in what was then Russia and is now Poland. It's a day to celebrate the International Language.

Each year a special poster is designed and distributed – in dozens of languages (see the sample above). Meetings are organized by local clubs, dinners are arranged, petitions are given to local authorities, schools, and national organizations. Sometimes governments are involved.

Writing in the most recent issue of the journal *Ondo de Esperanto*, former president of the Universal Esperanto Association Dr. Renato Corsetti calls to mind Zamenhof's first statements about his language, delivered in the early days of its publication. In those days, says Corsetti,

Zamenhof spoke of swords “thirsty for blood” as nation confronted nation. Today, Corsetti points out, it is not swords but drones that threaten the nations: the threat continues but its scale of destruction is greater.

We call on all people to think for a moment on July 26 about a world in which equality of speech replaces violence, and an international language becomes a means of communication through which we can seek common ground among all people – in a spirit of equality.

A utopian vision? Maybe – but today, quite literally, millions of people have learned Esperanto and millions use it to communicate with one another, form friendships across national boundaries, do business together, and work to create what people like Corsetti describe as “an epidemic of common sense.” Join us!



Final plans under way for 2024 World Congress of Esperanto in Arusha, Tanzania

Representatives from over forty countries will converge on Arusha, Tanzania, from August 3 to August 10 for this year’s World Congress of Esperanto, the 109th in an annual series going back to 1905, when the first such congress was held in Boulogne-sur-Mer, France. This year’s theme, “People, Language and Environment for a Better World” will focus particularly on Africa and on the relationship between sustainable development and language. The congress will include regular meetings of the Universal Esperanto Association’s governing bodies, scholarly presentations, and theatrical and musical performances.

UEA’s newly founded Commission on Women’s Affairs will hold its second meeting, under the guidance of its four-person organizing committee consisting of members from China, Cuba, Madagascar and Poland. Also planned is a special gathering of African women to discuss Esperanto in Africa and the ways it can contribute to sustainable development.

The Congress will also receive a report from Anny Joanice (Burundi) and Mana Brinson (DR Congo) who represented the Universal Esperanto Association at the UN’s recent 69th Civil Society Conference in Nairobi.

Coordinating the congress topic will be François Hounsounou (Benin). To contact the coordinating team, write to KongresaTemo@groups.io.

Refugees: A call to confront a growing worldwide problem

In a strongly worded message on the occasion of World Refugee Day, 20 June 2024, the Universal Esperanto Association called for renewed attention by governments and NGOs to the

worldwide problem of human displacement, and particularly to the language needs and language rights of refugees.

“Refugees are among the most vulnerable people in today’s world,” the UEA’s statement began. “In addition to fleeing from persecution, terror, conflict or catastrophe, they often still face danger on their way to refuge and in the regions where they seek safety. Yet refugees are people and have human rights. They have a right to rebuild their lives.”

“Together we can guarantee their safety, and we can support their economic and social inclusion. And together we can work to eliminate the causes of their flight,” says the statement.

“Solidarity is the key: in host countries, solidarity to receive refugees and help them prosper in the new community; internationally, solidarity to help end conflicts and repair natural catastrophes, rebuild countries, and support host countries with needed resources.”

“The refugee experience produces a deep sense of helplessness,” UEA’s message points out. The message goes on to quote the philosopher Hannah Arendt, herself a refugee: “We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life. We lost our occupation, which means the confidence that we are of some use in this world. We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings.”

“Because language is so basic to human life,” UEA points out, “it should receive special attention. Where a common language is lacking, language is often the major barrier for refugees; where a common language exists, it can be an open door and a path to full integration. We call for urgent attention to the linguistic human rights of refugees. As with all other people, they have a right to use their languages, a right to learn, a right to access services, and a right to participate in public discussion through their mother languages. They also have a right to learn the languages of their new home.”

“As a community of speakers of the international language Esperanto,” the statement concludes, “we strive to facilitate communication, to make human relations easier, to cultivate a strong sense of solidarity and to expand understanding and respect.” The message has been conveyed to the United Nations through the UN Economic and Social Council and has been circulated to news outlets across the world.

Universal Esperanto Association Office for Liaison with the United Nations, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017. [1] 212-687-7041. www.esperantoporun.org.