



***Message of the Universal Esperanto
Association to the United Nations on the
occasion of World Refugee Day, 20 June 2024***

Refugees are among the most vulnerable people in today's world. 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.

This year's theme of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is: "**For a world where refugees are welcomed.**" 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. The philosopher Hannah Arendt, herself a refugee, describes this helplessness as follows: "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." [Arendt, *We Refugees* 1943]

Because language is so basic to human life, 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, we strive to facilitate communication, to make human relations easier, to cultivate a strong sense of solidarity and to expand understanding and respect. A world where refugees are welcomed is a world where all languages are welcomed: together, let us build such a world.