



***Message of the Universal Esperanto Association on  
the occasion of the International Day of the World's  
Indigenous Peoples, 9 August 2024***

This year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples draws particular attention to the rights of Indigenous Peoples who live in conditions of voluntary isolation. These groups are the best protectors of the territories in which they live – if their rights are respected. They also attest to the cultural and linguistic richness of humankind.

Indigenous Peoples live in around 90 countries all across the world, but they are responsible for 7000 languages and 5000 different cultures. These constitute unique ways of relating to people and the environment. They have a right to live and prosper, and we need such knowledge, languages and worldviews if we wish to continue to dwell in a truly living world. As the Brazilian Indigenous writer Ailton Krenak puts it: "Either you listen to the voices of all other beings who live on the planet, or you make war against life on earth."

We draw special attention to language rights. According to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), indigenous communities have a right to revitalize their languages, and to use, develop and transmit them to future generations. They have the right to understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings. They have a right to education in their own languages. They have a right to establish their own media in their own languages.

As the 23rd session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues pointed out this year, languages and cultural practices are essential for self-determination, and member states must take stronger action to protect these practices against erosion and loss. There is a need for new policies consistent with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

But the same Forum, in a report on the activities of UN bodies in relation to indigenous peoples and the Sustainable Development Goals, pointed out that only the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Organization for Migration, and UNESCO have drawn attention to the importance of languages, with special action by UNESCO for language conservation, education and participation by indigenous peoples.

As an organization whose aim is linguistic equality and worldwide understanding, the Universal Esperanto Association supports the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) as a worldwide effort to make these languages visible and audible. The 2022 World Congress of Esperanto, in Montreal, Canada, focused on the International Decade as its main theme. The theme of this year's World Congress, currently in session in Arusha, Tanzania, again emphasizes the important relationship among language and environment, including the preservation of indigenous languages.

Let us fully respect the rights of indigenous peoples and learn from them about their ways of living and understanding of life. Thus we can discover new ways for our own life as a worldwide community with a worldwide common language.