

# Esperanto and the UN

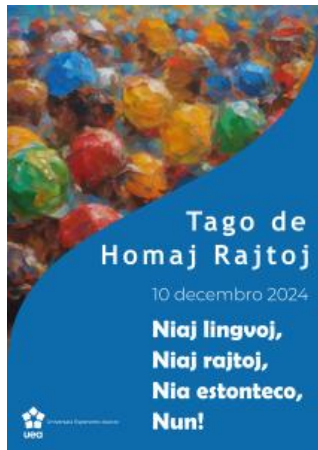
## Newsletter of the Universal Esperanto Association's Office of Liaison with the United Nations

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### Human Rights Day 2024: Celebration and protest



This year, December 10 was a day for celebration and protest in the Esperanto movement. As a December 10 message from the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) pointed out, “When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed in 1948, it constituted a promise-filled message to a world torn apart by a horrendous world war. The various states, with their various peoples, identified themselves with the principles presented in the Universal Declaration, as did many nongovernmental organizations. The Universal Esperanto Association declared these principles fundamental to the work of the Association.”

In short, it was a day for celebrating the Universal Declaration’s coming into force and also assessing the progress of a core principle of UEA: respect for human rights.

At the same time, UEA’s message on Human Rights Day sounded a sober note: “Today, the principles of the Universal Declaration are too often ignored, with the result that whole populations suffer war, poverty, disease and homelessness, millions of refugees barely survive, and conflicts and wars proliferate, along with failures to observe basic human rights.”

As a result, UEA “urgently calls on governments, international organizations and ordinary people throughout the world to strengthen and renew their efforts to guarantee basic human rights for all individuals and peoples.”

Of particular interest to UEA are language rights and the right to free expression: “In our Association the Declaration of Human Rights is, then, fundamental to our activity. Our particular interest lies in international communication, in the right to self-expression and the right to be heard in a spirit as equal and inclusive as possible. For this reason, we study and advance linguistic human rights and the path to mutual understanding among different peoples.” One of the Association’s main goals is creating equality of linguistic communication, so a lessening of the all-too-common practice in which those with the stronger languages force their languages on those with less powerful languages, thereby creating an inequality in which the strong silence the weak.

Human Rights Day coincides annually with the anniversary of the resolution of the UNESCO General Conference in 1954, which recognized the role of Esperanto in bringing the world's peoples together and thus began cooperation between UEA and UNESCO. On the same day as Human Rights Day 2024, a celebration in Montevideo, Uruguay, where the UNESCO General Conference took place in 1954, hosted visitors from across the world to mark the seventieth anniversary of cooperation between the two organizations.

Our Association annually celebrates Human Rights Day, on December 10, along with another date, December 15, when the creator of Esperanto, L. L. Zamenhof (1859-1917), was born.

This December, Zamenhof Day was celebrated across the world, with special meetings, dinners and other events in dozens of countries – notably Poland (the birthplace of Esperanto), China, Japan, Germany, Brazil, Hungary, and Russia.

UEA's Human Rights Day Message ends with the Association's rededication to the task: "On the occasion of International Human Rights Day 2024, we renew our pledge to advance human rights, to take action to minimize and remove language barriers in international relations, and to advance understanding and respect among the various peoples of the world. Without mutual understanding there is no way to avoid wars, no way to solve the problems of today's world, and no way to create the conditions for a sustainable world in the future."

## **Montevideo conference marks 70 years of cooperation between UNESCO and Esperanto for linguistic human rights**

On December 10, UEA also celebrated the 70th anniversary of the resolution of the UNESCO General Conference, approved in Montevideo on that date in 1954, which recognized "the results achieved by Esperanto in the field of international intellectual exchange and for the rapprochement of the peoples of the world." This resolution launched formal relations between UEA and UNESCO – in what is now seventy years of cooperation. Among other activities, UEA cooperates in UNESCO's Decade of Indigenous Languages, and it also dedicated its annual World Congress of Esperanto, in Montreal in 2022, to that topic.

The programme of the event in Montreal included greetings from the President of the Uruguay Chamber of Deputies Ana Olivera, from Dr François Lo Jacomo, UEA board member for external relations and representative of UEA to UNESCO, and from Nathalie Kesler, of the NGO Pangée, based in Paris. Video greetings came from Ahmad Mamduhi (Iran), president of ILEI (the International League of Esperantist Teachers), Renée Triolle (France), former representative of UEA to UNESCO, Laura Brazzabeni (Italy), president of the Italian Esperanto Federation, and Floreal Martorell (France), president of Eurokka. Personal greetings came from Gabriel Wagner and Silvia Rottenberg, presidents, respectively, of the Argentine Esperanto League and the Esperanto Association of Buenos Aires, plus Querino Neto, president of the Brazilian Esperanto League, who opened a panel discussion among young Esperantist attendees on the future of the International Language.

The ceremony was attended by, among others the Canadian Consul, Isabelle Roy. The event took place under the guidance of Guy Matte (Canada), chair of UEA's Americas Commission, and Sonia Rizzo, president of the Uruguayan Esperanto Society. Attending the event were also representatives of the Esperanto societies of various countries in the Americas, Europe and Asia – along with a large group of young people, representatives of TEJO (the world organization of young Esperantists) and of national youth movements in the region. Additional participants from various parts of the world attended virtually by YouTube and Zoom.

Following the messages of greeting were video presentations by Humphrey Tonkin, UEA representative to the UN in New York, on “UNESCO, Languages and Human Rights” and Mireille Grosjean, a UEA representative to the UN in Geneva. Karine Ducloyer lectured on the First Universal Exhibition of Esperanto, which took place in Montevideo in 1954 at the same time as the General Conference. A lecture by Dr Lo Jacomo discussed UNESCO's language policy.

In the various presentations, emphasis was placed on the role of the International Language Esperanto, which has been in existence for 137 years and whose aims and ideals are in accord with those of UNESCO. Attention was given to the fact that in Montevideo UNESCO in its eighth General Conference recognized the work of UEA and accorded it the status of nongovernmental organization, establishing consultative relations with it. One item in the programme of the conference was a brief film of a reading of the text of UNESCO Resolution IV.4.422-4224 in Esperanto and Spanish by Esperantists from various parts of the world.

The event, which had the support of the Ministry of Education and Culture, included musical participation by the Hugo Balzo School of Artistic Education and ended with a musical presentation by the Argentine Esperanto singer Alejandro Cosavella.

In short, the Montevideo Conference was a memorable occasion, reinforcing the importance of cooperation between UNESCO and the Universal Esperanto Association in the defence of linguistic human rights. The presence of eminent participants and of young Esperantists from various countries underlined the global importance of the International Language Esperanto. The event not only commemorated the historical significance of the Montevideo Resolution of 1954 but also illuminated the ongoing effort to advance linguistic human rights and cultural exchange. For the past seventy years, Esperanto has continued to serve as a bridge between the various peoples and cultures, and this conference clearly showed that the work for linguistic diversity and human rights remains fundamental – and still incomplete. Looking to the future, the Esperanto community will continue its pledge to work for global understanding and inclusive communication.