

Esperanto and the UN

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Esperanto in the UNESCO General Conference

The 43rd Session of the UNESCO General Conference took place from 30 October to 13 November, 2025, in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, bringing together representatives of almost all of the 194 member-states. Over the two weeks, the delegates discussed education, science and culture, in a setting symbolising the Silk Road and intercultural dialogue. Attending the event was a seven-person delegation from the Universal Esperanto Association, among them Espoir Kasati, from DR Congo. In a report written for *esperanto-afriko.org*, he described the activities of UEA's delegation during their time in Samarkand. Here's a summary:

For fifteen days in Samarkand, an important historic city of Uzbekistan on the Silk Road, over 4500 people, including diplomats from UNESCO member-states and representatives of



nongovernmental organizations, met for the 43rd UNESCO General Conference. The Universal Esperanto Association was represented by an international delegation consisting of Mireille Grosjean (Switzerland), François Lo Jacomo (France), Ningna Wei (China), Nathalie Kesler (France), Espoir Ngoma Kasati (Democratic Republic of Congo), Max Garcia (Spain), kaj Shah-Ahmad Mutalov (Uzbekistan).

During the conference, our responsibilities were: distributing leaflets proclaiming July 26 as World Esperanto Day, contacting diplomatic representatives of UNESCO member states, contacting representatives of other NGOs to inform them of the problem of linguistic discrimination and the importance of Esperanto as a facilitator of international communication – a language spoken by citizens of almost all of their countries.

During this Conference, Swahili was named an official working language of the UNESCO General Conferences. In the general political debate, Mireille Grosjean spoke on behalf of the UEA delegation, calling on member states to consider the importance and utility of Esperanto for international two-way communication among peoples of the whole world. She mentioned two resolutions by which UNESCO recognised the value of Esperanto, in 1954 and 1985. Much as

the Swahili language language crosses borders (she said) Esperanto crosses borders all across the world. We Esperanto speakers have two recommendations for UNESCO: to recognize 26 July as World Esperanto Day and to include Esperanto in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List. She also mentioned two priorities of UEA: communication in Africa, and the situation of women across the world. UEA is already working with UNESCO on the Decade of Indigenous Languages and on the role of languages in education.

Many delegates were interested by the fact that people from different continents formed a delegation whose members were from different countries and could communicate and understand one another through Esperanto. During the stay in Samarkand, the delegation met local Esperanto speakers and at least one member of the interpreting staff who spoke Esperanto. Presented to the delegation was a newly published book by Anatolij Lonesov on the history of Esperanto in Central Asia. The strengthening of contacts between UNESCO and UEA continues under the guidance of UEA board member François Lo Jacomo.

Message of the Universal Esperanto Association on International Mother Language Day, 21 February 2026

The Universal Esperanto Association is a firm supporter of the right to learn and use mother tongues, among other things to avoid discrimination against minority languages in favour of the majority. Too often, the result of such discrimination is limitation on the participation of minorities in national and international life, and the suppression of political and cultural life.

In its message on International Mother Language Day on 21 February, UEA pointed out that this special day "has its origins in the 1952 struggle for the right to use the native Bengali language in what was then East Pakistan and became Bangladesh." Thus the day reminds us "that language is an important part of the identity of peoples and communities. Languages convey traditions, knowledge and history. And the child who initially learns through their mother tongue learns most easily and with dignity."

"To advance strong communities, we need to advance multilingualism. Everyone should have the right to learn and grow through their mother tongue, and also to acquire regional, national, and international languages. Through multilingualism, wisely used, every individual can participate, talk and be heard. Thus, everyone can decide together their common future."

The message explains that "a multilingual world requires multilingual education and multilateralism. This is the road to peace and justice, to sustainable development, and to realising the goals of the United Nations: peace, human rights, international cooperation and friendly relations among nations and peoples. Linguistic justice requires the creation of environments in which all languages and all voices are valued and have space to exist and prosper in dignity and equality... To save the world's cultural diversity, we must also save its linguistic diversity."

"Since its founding in 1908, the Universal Esperanto Association has been working to advance international communication, understanding and respect among peoples. Through the international language Esperanto and its shared equality, we propose an understanding among people where everyone may recognize one another in their humanity, and live together in harmony and peace."

In its message, UEA further notes that “we will soon reach the midpoint in the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), which, among other goals, seeks to conserve and strengthen the linguistic human rights of indigenous peoples and guarantee that they are able to preserve, strengthen and disseminate their languages.”

The annual World Congress of Esperanto that took place in Montreal in August 2022 had as its theme ‘Language, life, soil: The Decade of Indigenous Languages,’ marking the launch of the special decade. The 2026 Congress will take place in Graz, Austria, from August 1 to August 8, 2026, and will pay particular attention to volunteer work in the service of sustainable development.

International Women’s Day, 8 March 2026

Guided by UEA’s Women’s Commission, the Association prepared a message on the occasion of International Women’s Day 2026, March 8. (UEA), an organization in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, salutes women and girls across the world and reasserts its commitment to gender equality and women’s rights, in collaboration with other civil society organisations and international partners.

“This year’s theme for International Women’s Day, proposed by the United Nations, is **Rights, Justice, Action: For ALL Women and Girls**. It emphasizes that equality requires concrete action. To achieve true justice for all, we must remove all barriers to equal justice: discriminatory laws, weak or ineffective legal protections, and damaging practices and social norms which undermine the rights, security and dignity of women and girls.

The message gives particular attention to questions of language: “UEA also stresses the importance of linguistic justice. If women and girls are to participate fully in political, economic and cultural life, they need equal access to language resources – including education in the mother tongue and access to additional languages for international communication. Language inequality reinforces other forms of inequality. Through the International Language Esperanto and its worldwide network of speakers, the Esperanto movement contributes to a more inclusive international dialogue and a stronger voice for worldwide civil society, including women and girls.”

“Gender equality and full participation of women in all spheres of life are essential for justice and sustainable development. Without real access to justice, education, information and decision-making, rights are merely paper declarations.”

In short, and with particular emphasis, “UEA calls on all relevant authorities to act decisively and responsibly so that all women and girls – without exception – can enjoy full rights, equal protection and concrete opportunities to develop their potential.”

The Esperanto press: International exchange and vigorous debate

Sometimes we have to remind our NGO and UN friends that the international Esperanto community has a lively periodical press—and always has had, since its beginnings almost a century and a half ago. The Universal Esperanto Association puts out a monthly journal, *Revuo*

Esperanto, and its associated specialized organizations offer a range of such publications, as do numbers of national Esperanto associations. Other journals are entirely independent. The January issue of *Revuo Esperanto* contains a report on the activities of the seven-member UEA delegation to the recent Unesco General Conference session in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The delegation was led by board member François Lo Jacomo and included representatives from Switzerland, DR Congo, Uzbekistan, China, France and Spain.

The latest issue of *Etnismo*, edited in Spain, offers articles on Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiongo, indigenous peoples in Argentina, the future of the Irish language, and a memorial to Uwe Joachim Moritz, of Germany, who founded the journal in 1972.

The journal *IPR: Internacia Pedagogia Revuo* for January 2026, reports on plans for the 59th world congress of teachers of Esperanto, to be held at Zaozhuang University, China, this coming July, and also offers an additional slant on the Unesco General Conference in Samarkand.

Working with the Chinese Esperanto League, UEA helps to produce the *Unesco Courier* in Esperanto, in print and online. A recent issue focuses on global warming, with articles on Mount Kilimanjaro, Central Asia, indigenous traditions, and glaciers in Norway.

The January 2026 issue of *Monato* (The Month), published in Belgium, includes a profile of the newly-elected Japanese prime minister Takaichi Sanae, diplomatic initiatives in Western Sahara, developments in Venezuela, and other world news, while the youth magazine *Kontakto* looks at Brazilian film, shadow theatre, youth training sessions organized by the Esperanto youth organization TEJO in Hungary, and other developments among young Esperantists.

At 300 pages, a double issue of *Beletra Almanako* (February-June 2025) offers a wide range of original and translated poetry and prose. Three articles focus on the Hungarian utopian novelist Sándor Szathmári (who wrote in Esperanto) on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his death – including an announcement of the publication of a hitherto unpublished novel. Wang Chonfang and Wei Yida discuss translation of Chinese classical poetry into Esperanto and Marc van Oostendorp tells the story of a recently discovered cache of letters in Esperanto exchanged between a Dutch sailor and his Italian sweetheart in a love affair torn apart by World War II and the rise of fascism.

The April-June 2025 issue of the politically leftist *Sennaciulo* addresses technology and society by asking whether a paperless society is as ecologically sound as the one it is replacing. It also contains reports on the 2025 congress of SAT, the worldwide “nation-less” Esperanto organization.

And this, as they say, is just a sample.

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