Esperanto and the UN

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Universal Esperanto Association celebrates United Nations Day, 24 October 2026, with a plea for greater international understanding

In its message marking UN Day 2026, the Universal Esperanto Association both celebrated the achievements of the United Nations and stressed the need "to put collective welfare ahead of narrow self-interest" in the search for international understanding. The full message, conveyed to the UN's Economic and Social Council and circulated across the world through UEA's affiliates, stated as follows:



"United Nations Day, 24 October, marks the date in 1945 when the United Nations was founded, as the tragedy of the Second World War was coming to an end and the painful process of recovery was beginning. The United Nations Charter lists the organization's four purposes:

1. To maintain international peace and security.
2. To develop friendly relations among nations.
3. To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems.
4. To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

"This spirit of co-operation has been continually tested, but has endured. It is dependent on the good will of all, on a degree of mutual trust, and on a willingness to listen as well as act.

"At a time when there is greater need than ever before to put collective welfare ahead of narrow self-interest, and when talking together, listening together and acting together are constantly threatened, our Association (the Universal Esperanto Association) remains devoted to the quest for international understanding expressed in the UN Charter and in the similar ideals embodied in the International Language Esperanto.

“Speakers of Esperanto all across the world congratulate the United Nations on the UN’s eighty-first year and call on its member states to work together for the good of all and for the welfare of the international community.”

UEA participates in conference on “Communicating for a Better World”

“The United Nations: Communicating for a Better World” was the title of a conference recently organized in New York City by scholars at Columbia University and the City University of New York (CUNY). From October 21 to 23, hundreds of communications experts, students and UN officials converged on the CUNY and Columbia campuses for a lively discussion of UN outreach, including new forms of communication, new communication strategies, and new ways of reaching the UN’s many publics. Citing an early resolution of the General Assembly (13 February 1946), to the effect that “*the United Nations cannot achieve its purposes unless the peoples of the world are fully informed of its aims and activities,”* the conference organizers gathered a wide range of specialists to address the issue of effective communication.

Melissa Fleming, Under Secretary-General for Global Communications at the UN, praising the conference organizers, stressed a single goal: “using communications to build a better world and advance solutions to global challenges.” The degree of interest in the topic and the enthusiasm of the participants led to lively debate and original ideas.

Largely missing from the debate, however, was emphasis on two-way communication – on listening and understanding as well as directing messages from the centre to the periphery. Little attention was given to linguistic diversity and the need to communicate in languages that the public can understand and in which they can themselves communicate.

An exception in this regard was a paper offered by the Universal Esperanto Association’s representatives to the UN, Humphrey Tonkin and Francis M. Hult, which dealt with language as a human right and stressed the vital importance of two-way communication. “Important though it may be, it is not enough to communicate outwards to the world: equally important is listening to the messages coming back and adapting accordingly,” Tonkin commented. “Are we ready for that?”

As Under Secretary-General Fleming pointed out, “Whatever we want to heal in this troubled world, communication is key.” The New York conference was an important step in the process, but more attention must be given to the two-way nature of communication and the need to listen, as well as speak, in the languages of the world.

The title of the paper of Professors Tonkin and Hult pointed in that direction: “The Pursuit of Language Equality in 2026 and Beyond.” The paper stressed the idea of language as a human right and the importance both of communicating across languages and of preserving linguistic diversity. A right to listen must be accompanied by a right to be heard.

If a second conference is called, Tonkin suggested, the role of language and language choice in the communication process should receive greater emphasis. “We need to reach people where they are,” he suggested, “and that is not necessarily in an English-language bubble – or even in a major-language bubble.” Communication, in short, is a two-way street.

Esperanto events around the world

Anyone wanting to hear Esperanto spoken and get a sense of the Esperanto movement would do well to visit *eventaservo.org*, a service providing notices of upcoming activities in Esperanto, many of them accessible remotely.

While providing only a sample of Esperanto activities across the world, the site provides a way into a worldwide community of speakers. For November 7, for example, eventaservo.org lists eighteen events on that day in Russia, Madagascar, France, Sweden, Belgium, the United States, Canada, Brazil, Mexico and elsewhere.

In addition to courses and presentations of various kinds, programmes cover professional fields, special interests, hobbies and entertainment. A major event later in November (26-29 Nov.) will be the annual Virtual Congress of Esperanto, attended by upwards of a thousand Esperanto speakers from around the world and running on a 24-hour schedule. The annual Virtual Congresses began during the Covid emergency and have continued ever since – in addition to the annual in-person World Congress of Esperanto, held this year in Graz, Austria, and taking place next year in Melbourne, Australia.