



## **Universal Esperanto Association (UEA)**

Intervention at the  
*Human Rights Council, UN, Geneva,*  
*13<sup>th</sup> session, 1 to 26 March 2010*  
16 March 2010

### **Linguistic rights of minorities**

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I represent the Universal Esperanto Association, the worldwide association for the international, neutral and democratic language used in more than 100 countries.

We note that at the UN

- many documents are only distributed in English.
- the plenary sessions are interpreted in the six official languages of the UN, but many smaller working groups are held only in English.
- sessions on the Internet are transmitted in the original language of the speaker and in English. If someone does not understand either language, he cannot follow the debates.
- some of the proceedings of the UN are not translated in six languages, but in two or three of them. We deplore this.

We are strongly opposed to the fact that an international organisation like the UN operates increasingly in only one national language.

One example amongst others is the website of UNIFEM, the UN organisation for women, which is only in English. This is unacceptable.

The diversity of living species is precious and must be maintained, in the same way as cultural and linguistic diversity. This diversity is visible in this room and constitutes an immense richness. If a national language becomes an international language, this is unfair and undemocratic. Whilst a non-English speaker is trying to find his words, the English speaker is already looking for his arguments. There is therefore always an advantage for the English speaker. Whilst an English-speaking scientist is doing research in chemistry or physics, the non-English-speaking scientist must study English in order to publish in English. The English speaker will have more chance of being the first to get a patent or the Nobel Prize. This situation is unfair.

This session on the morning of 16 March is reserved for the rights of minorities\*. Among the peoples of the world, let us now take the example of French speakers in Africa who feel discriminated against; are they in the process of becoming a minority?

We request the UN and relevant international organisations to do their utmost to always use several working languages, if possible the six official languages of the UN, even though this already constitutes discrimination vis-à-vis the 6000 other languages in the world which are not used at the UN for obvious reasons.

We thank and congratulate the organizers of this session for making it possible to provide interpretation in sign language during the session of 5 March concerning the rights of disabled persons in the world.

To conclude, we refer to the year 2008 which was declared Year of Languages by the UN\*\*, with UNESCO taking charge of its implementation. We request the UN to declare the decade 2012 to 2021 the Decade of Languages.

Thank you for your attention.

#### References :

\* Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities Adopted by General Assembly Resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/minorities.htm>

\*\* General Assembly Proclaims 2008 International Year of Languages, in effort to promote unity in diversity, global understanding, Press release, Sixty-first General Assembly Plenary, 96th Meeting, 16 May 2007  
<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/ga10592.doc.htm>