



**Declaration by the Universal Esperanto Association  
(Universala Esperanto-Asocio, UEA)  
at the 9th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
EMRIP/MEDPA-9, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 11-15 July 2016**

*Wednesday, 13 July, item 7 on the agenda:  
The Sustainable Development Goals and the rights of indigenous peoples*

Madam Chairman, dear representatives of indigenous peoples, ladies and gentlemen, *saluton!* My name is Stefano Keller, and I represent *Universala Esperanto-Asocio (UEA)*, the world organization of speakers of the fair and neutral international language Esperanto.

Discussion of sustainable development cannot be confined solely to talking about our natural environment, but also means considering the place and the role of human beings in their surroundings. This is particularly important for indigenous peoples, their ancestral knowledge, their way of life, their cultures, their languages and their relationship with the environment in which they live.

We all need to be aware of the fact that biological diversity is inseparable from language diversity – the two are interwoven and interdependent. The loss of traditional knowledge as a result of the erosion of language diversity is of great concern, since both are essential for maintaining biological diversity and ensuring the survival of us all.

I would like to remind you of two passages in the Declaration adopted at the 64th Conference of NGOs held in Bonn, Germany, in 2011 to prepare for the “Rio+20” conference on sustainable development in 2012:

*“[We, the NGOs, are] committed to promoting respect for cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity and fostering solidarity and reciprocity among peoples, including indigenous peoples and nations [...].”*

And here is another paragraph in the Declaration, proposed by the World Esperanto Association:  
*“We call for the respect and inclusion of ethnic languages in the educational system, as those languages comprise the complexity of their respective environments, and consideration of the potential of a neutral international language.”*

Several speakers in this 9<sup>th</sup> session of EMRIP have referred to the importance, indeed the necessity, of making the working documents distributed at our meetings available to the participants in the six official languages of the UN and not just in English, as is often the case. Others have stressed the importance of education in the mother tongue and the problems associated with indigenous peoples’ lack of language rights. *We back them in their demands!*

It is against the background of this movement for fair communication, with respect for equality of opportunities, that on **26 July** we will mark **World Esperanto Day, the day of linguistic justice**. On that day it will be 129 years since the publication of the first manual of the international language Esperanto.

If you want to immerse yourselves in a world where communication and contacts between representatives of different peoples take place in an atmosphere of respect and fairness, with rewarding exchanges, we invite you to visit the 101st World Esperanto Congress, to be held in Nitra, Slovakia, from 23 to 30 July this year with more than 1 200 participants from some 60 countries, including speakers of nearly a hundred languages. This major worldwide meeting between peoples will discuss – without language barriers, with no need for interpreters – the topic “Social justice – linguistic justice”. The sole official language used during this congress will be Esperanto, understood and spoken by everyone. You are cordially and warmly invited to try this interesting and rewarding experience!

Thank you for your attention / *dankon pro via atento*.  
*Kaj grandan dankon al la interpretistoj por ilia grava laboro!*  
And many thanks for the important work of the interpreters!

Translated by Brian Moon, Luxembourg  
Tradukis Brian Moon, Luksemburgo

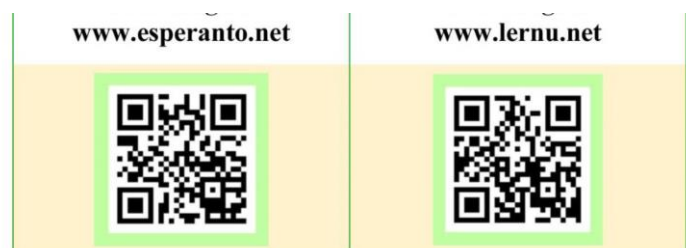
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