



## General Assembly

Distr.  
GENERAL

A/HRC/9/NGO/46  
1 September 2008

ENGLISH, FRENCH AND  
SPANISH ONLY

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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
Ninth session  
Agenda item 3

### **PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

**Written statement\* submitted by the Universal Esperanto Association, a non-governmental  
organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in  
accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 August 2008]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

### **The position of the Universal Esperanto Association on linguistic rights**

Linguistic rights are vital to all peoples, whatever the size of their population. This right needs to be preserved especially for small groups. The Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) has been supporting minority languages for over 100 years.

The right of children to learn their mother tongue and continue their education using their mother tongue is not only important for their culture, it is essential for their psychological development. It has been shown in many large-scale studies in several countries that if indigenous and minority children are educated mainly using their mother tongue as the teaching language for the first 6-8 years (with competent teaching of the dominant language as a second language, given by bilingual teachers), their general school achievement is better. Also, they learn the dominant language more proficiently than if their teaching is carried out through the medium of the dominant language. If they have only a year or two in the mother tongue and are then transferred to the dominant language, they may manage fairly well at the beginning, but from approximately the fourth grade on, their progress starts slowing down and the gap between them and children whose mother tongue is the dominant language continues to widen.

It is also important for people to be able to communicate at different levels. The UEA advocates learning 2, 3 or 4 languages, according to the circumstances, i.e.:

1. mother tongue
2. regional language, if different
3. national language, if different from the first two
4. an international language, that does not belong to any nation - that is Esperanto.

Esperantists know that when a multinational group uses one neutral, common language, the quality of communication is very special. The ultimate aim of Esperanto is to promote peace between people by making communication easier and more equitable. Using a common language avoids a situation where people who are using their mother tongue have a huge advantage over those who are not.

We would like the United Nations to give some consideration to this as regards their own meetings. The discrepancy is very obvious when one hears delegates expressing themselves in English, French or Spanish for whom it is either the second or third language. When a mother-tongue speaker takes the floor, often the difference is striking - what they say has much more weight and attracts much more attention than a speaker who is speaking a foreign language.

The great hope of Esperantists is that the world will become a more peaceful place, and we believe that effective communication plays a very important role in achieving this.

Reference: "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".

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