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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

**Written statement* submitted by World Esperanto Association (UEA),
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.

[3 February 2005]

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

According to Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion,". However so far the linguistic aspect of Human Rights has received little attention, whether within the UN or from individual member-states.

Experts from numerous countries have reported on the negative consequences of educating children in languages other than their mother tongue¹. Studies have shown that the use of an inappropriate language at school is one of the most important factors, possibly the decisive factor, in students leaving school early, which in its turn leads to serious social problems. Early school-leavers are at greater risk for unemployment, and are more likely to be implicated in youth and adult criminal activities, alcoholism and drugs use.

According to one study produced by a UN agency², enormous sums could be saved by the world's poorest countries, if they were to respect the linguistic human rights of their inhabitants and to teach in their local languages.

The speakers of the international planned language Esperanto endorse the above conclusions. In addition they consider that the present situation, in which only certain languages are used for contacts between members of different peoples, is unsatisfactory, discriminatory, and fails to contribute to the requirements for international understanding, peace and equality. Furthermore, it contradicts Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The language problem has been discussed at various meetings in recent years, including the International Seminar on Language and Human Rights under the auspices of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the CONGO Asian Civil Society Forum in Bangkok. On all these occasions, recommendations were made which were subsequently ignored.

The World Esperanto Association, on the basis of the recommendations taken during the above meetings, and also of numerous recommendations made by the UN's own experts, requests the United Nations to take the following steps:

1 The UN Commission for Human Rights should set up an Ad-Hoc Working Group to study the problems of linguistic human rights and the violation of human rights caused by linguistic inequality and injustice. The Working Group's report should include medium- and long-term measures to ensure linguistic human rights in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

2 The UN Commission for Human Rights should support the attempts by experts, including the World Esperanto Association, to study and experiment with the most effective ways of selecting the languages to be used for teaching in schools, with the aim of respecting linguistic human rights and encouraging development in the countries concerned.

¹ These experts include a number working for the United Nations, for instance the writers of the recent reports for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, or the international experts working for the UNESCO Programme on the Safeguarding of Endangered Languages.

² Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World, produced for the United Nations Development Programme.

3 The UN Economic and Social Council should place "Language and Human Rights" on the agenda of one of its forthcoming meetings.
