



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of the award of the Diploma  
of Honourable Member  
of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences**

**Baku, Azerbaijan, 14 May 2008**

Madam Mehriban Aliyeva, First Lady of Azerbaijan,

Your Royal Highnesses,

Madam former President of Iceland,

Mr Mahmud Karimov, President of the National Academy of Sciences

of Azerbaijan and member of the National Commission for UNESCO,

Honourable Members of the Academy,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and a privilege to join you today in the magnificent surroundings of the Institute of History to receive the Academy's prestigious Honourable Member Diploma.

Mr Karimov, your active membership of the National Commission for UNESCO and your participation in our Ministerial Round Tables on Science exemplify the strong bonds that exist between the National Academy of Sciences and UNESCO.

Indeed, I see this Honour as a distinction that goes beyond my own person; it is also a tribute to UNESCO and its mission of promoting peace and sustainable development through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

This is the second distinction that your country has bestowed upon me. The first was the Order of Glory, which I had the privilege to receive from

President Ilham Aliyev on my second visit to Azerbaijan in August 2005. I treasure the award as a symbol of the close cooperation that exists between UNESCO and Azerbaijan, in particular in the field of culture.

I first came to appreciate the important weight culture and cultural traditions occupy in the history of Azerbaijan when I made my first official visit to Baku in April 2000, at the invitation of late President Heydar Aliyev, father of President Ilham Aliyev. This was on the occasion of the 1300th anniversary of the epic poem, “Kitabe Dede Quorgud”, which depicts most fabulously the life and culture of the Azeri people in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The celebration made a lasting impression on me, and deepened my conviction that culture is at the heart of human development.

At this moment, I should like to pay tribute to the exceptional work of the First Lady of Azerbaijan, Madam Mehriban Aliyeva, in promoting culture in all its forms.

As UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Oral and Musical Traditions, Madam Aliyeva has been tireless in her efforts to safeguard intangible cultural heritage, in particular the Mugham, which was proclaimed as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003. During my second trip to Azerbaijan in August 2005, I enjoyed a presentation of the Mugham. Together with the President and First Lady, I also laid the foundation stone for the Mugham Centre, which Madam Aliyeva is setting up to help promote the classical music of Azerbaijan internationally. I very much look forward to inaugurating the Centre in the near future.

Madam Aliyeva has also demonstrated outstanding commitment to the preservation of Azerbaijan’s exceptional tangible heritage. In particular, I would like to pay tribute to her efforts to address the risks facing the Walled City of Baku, which in 2000 was the first site from Azerbaijan to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and which in 2003 was added to the list of World Heritage in Danger.

I had the pleasure to visit the Walled City of Baku with Madam Aliyeva in August 2005, as well as the Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape, which in 2007 became the second site in Azerbaijan to be included on the World Heritage List.

I would not like to forget, either, the commitment that the President and First Lady have shown to educational development in the country. Since my previous visit, UNESCO has collaborated closely with the government of Azerbaijan in the implementation of an ambitious reform agenda. It is another sign of this drive for educational excellence, that Azerbaijan is co-hosting this week with UNESCO a regional conference on literacy in Europe, which I will open alongside Madam Aliyeva later this afternoon.

Madam Aliyeva,  
Your Royal Highnesses,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I am given the opportunity to celebrate another aspect of Azerbaijan's cooperation with UNESCO, since becoming a Member State in June 1992. I refer to our growing collaboration in the sciences. Here, the support of members of this esteemed Academy has been pivotal.

Since its establishment in 1945, the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences has played an important role, nationally and internationally, in the natural, social and human sciences. Its many distinguished members have included former President Yusif Mamadaliyev, the renowned petro-chemist whose 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary we celebrated at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in September 2005. This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of another former President, Musa Aliyev, and also that of the renowned writer and scientist, Mir Jalal Pashayev. On behalf of UNESCO, I pay tribute to each of them.

Academy members have consistently made important contributions to international scientific forums, workshops and joint research programmes. They have travelled abroad and welcomed scientists from other countries in

the interest of sharing and advancing scientific knowledge and understanding. Such exchanges go to the core of UNESCO's work of promoting international collaboration, reflection and action in the service of peace and development.

In 2005, the Academy's invaluable collection of Medieval Manuscripts on medicine and pharmacy was included on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. This is yet another example of how this august body is helping to preserve and promote the wisdom of science.

In this International Year of Planet Earth, I cannot emphasize strongly enough the crucial role that science plays in our efforts to achieve sustainable development. This is particularly apparent in a country as rich in natural resources as Azerbaijan, where strong national institutions such as the National Academy of Sciences play an instrumental role in enhancing our understanding of the earth's systems in order to better manage them. Indeed, I have been very pleased to witness the development of strong cooperation between Azerbaijan and UNESCO in the areas of water and the ecological and earth sciences.

For example, the work currently underway to designate Azerbaijan's first Man and the Biosphere reserve should make an important contribution to strengthening the links between science and society and therefore to sustainable environmental management.

Madam Aliyeva,  
Your Royal Highnesses,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO looks forward to extending its cooperation with Azerbaijan in all spheres of activity and in particular to engaging more directly with the National Academy of Sciences and its members.

It is therefore with great pride, pleasure and gratitude that I accept the Diploma of Honourable Member of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences.

Thank you very much.