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Organización
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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 concert “Goodwill Angels of Azerbaijan”**

UNESCO, 20 May 2008

Mrs Mehriban Aliyeva,
UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to UNESCO Headquarters for this special concert, held on the occasion of the annual meeting of UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassadors.

I should first like to express my heartfelt thanks to the First Lady of Azerbaijan and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Mrs Mehriban Aliyeva, for making this concert possible.

Although this is not the first concert that she has organized, the presence of so many other UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors this evening certainly makes it very special. Let me take this opportunity to thank them for their devotion to UNESCO and their work to support and raise awareness about our programmes.

I should like to pay tribute to Mrs Mehriban Aliyeva's exceptional work to promote culture in all its forms, both as President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and as UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Oral and Musical Traditions. Since her designation to that role in September 2004, Mrs Aliyeva has worked tirelessly to safeguard intangible cultural heritage, and in particular the Mugham, which was proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2003.

Indeed, I have just returned from Azerbaijan where I was able to see the progress made on the construction of the Mugham Centre established by Mrs Aliyeva, whose foundation stone I laid in 2005. I also had the pleasure of taking part, with President Ilham Aliyev and the First Lady, in the groundbreaking ceremony for a new carpet museum on the same site.

This evening's concert will give us all the opportunity to appreciate the intangible heritage of Azerbaijan and I would like to thank the National Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Children's Choir and the Baku School of Choreography who have travelled to Paris to share their talents with us.

Mrs Aliyeva has also demonstrated an outstanding devotion 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.

Let us not forget, either, the extraordinary commitment that President Ilham Aliyev and the First Lady have shown to educational development and reform in Azerbaijan.

In May 2005, President Aliyev set up an Education Commission tasked with improving the quality of education in Azerbaijan. Since then, the government of Azerbaijan and UNESCO have been working in close cooperation to implement an ambitious programme of educational reform covering teacher training, equity in educational provision, technical and vocational education, information and communication technologies and planning and management capacities: in short, the need to provide quality education across the board.

In addition to its importance in the national context, this on-going partnership between the Organization and Azerbaijan also makes an important contribution to UNESCO's top priority: our work globally to deliver Education for All.

On my visit to Baku last week I inaugurated the UNESCO Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy. This important Conference, generously hosted by Mrs Mehriban Aliyeva, allowed participants to address the literacy and adult education challenges specific to Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. It was

another testimony of her and the President's strong commitment to the promotion of education as the key to sustainable social and economic development.

In closing, I should like to wish you all a very pleasant evening and thank you for your attention.