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

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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 100th anniversary
of the birth of Mir Jalal Pashayev**

UNESCO, 10 November 2008

Madam Mehriban Aliyeva,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to UNESCO Headquarters to celebrate the illustrious Azerbaijani author and scholar, Mir Jalal Pashayev, on the 100th anniversary of his birth. It is an anniversary with which we are very proud to be officially associated, as part of our global action to promote international understanding.

Allow me first to take this opportunity to express my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr Ilham Aliyev on his recent re-election as the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. I am confident that this second term will witness a further strengthening of the excellent co-operation that exists between Azerbaijan and UNESCO.

My sincere thanks go to Mir Jalal Pashayev's granddaughter and First Lady of Azerbaijan, Madam Mehriban Aliyeva, for making this evening's celebration possible.

We are also honoured to welcome Madam Aliyeva's father, Mr Arif Pashayev, and Mir Jalal Pashayev's other children: Mr Hafiz Pashayev and Mrs Adiba Pashayeva. Thank you very much for joining us on this special occasion.

Since her designation as UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador in 2004, Madam Aliyeva has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to promoting UNESCO's values,

especially in the fields of education, culture and gender equality – three of our top priorities.

I would like in particular to recall the generous hospitality extended by the President and First Lady in May this year, in hosting in Baku a UNESCO Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy. It was just one example of their extraordinary work to promote quality education for all.

Nowadays, it is widely recognized that quality education is a pre-requisite for peace. It can help eliminate cultural stereotypes and build understanding and respect for the historical, artistic and scientific achievements that have shaped our shared heritage. In this regard, Madam Aliyeva's tireless work to promote and safeguard cultural diversity in all its forms is much appreciated, since it is an important tool for promoting dialogue and inter-cultural understanding.

Here, I would like to underscore the significance of an International Conference on Expanding the Role of Women in Cross Cultural Dialogue hosted by Madam Aliyeva in Baku in June 2008. It demonstrated her commitment to promoting gender equality and awareness about the contribution of women to peace and security.

I should also mention the high-level meeting on youth and dialogue held in Baku in November 2007. This provided a wonderful opportunity for young leaders to discuss the need for openness, dialogue, respect, trust and knowledge. In organizing this meeting, Madam Aliyeva made an investment in our common future: because it is young people who have the potential and the power to be agents of positive change.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO is always pleased to celebrate the anniversaries of eminent personalities in the Organization's fields of competence. They contribute to our work to promote mutual understanding among different peoples, and provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the wonderful cultural diversity that UNESCO seeks to safeguard through its global activities and standard setting actions.

Mir Jalal Pashayev was born in Ardabil on 26 April 1908. After receiving his Doctorate in Philology in 1947, he became Professor of Literature at Baku State University. A lifelong advocate of universalism, humanism, tolerance and free thought, Mir Jalal Pashayev holds a special place in the history of Azerbaijani literature.

In addition to his outstanding academic record, he is fondly remembered as one of Azerbaijan's most gifted short story writers and satirists. A writer of global importance, his works have been translated into many languages.

His contribution to Azerbaijani literature was recognized through numerous awards and his membership of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, an institution that has played an important role nationally and internationally in the natural, social and human sciences. Indeed, I was honoured to receive the Academy's Diploma of Honourable Member on 14 May this year.

Mir Jalal Pashayev was once asked to identify the greatest achievements of his life. To which he replied, "The greatest achievement of my life is my family". It now gives me great pleasure to give the floor to his granddaughter, Madam Mehriban Aliyeva.

Thank you for your attention.