

Aybaniz Telman Pashayeva. Mehriban Aliyeva's role in the development of the East–West intercultural dialogue

For large–scale and selfless activity in different areas, including the dialogue among civilizations, attention to children in need of care, the improvement of their living conditions, great support in education and in projects that are implemented in the Islamic world, on November 24, 2006 Mehriban Aliyeva was awarded the title Goodwill Ambassador UNESCO and ISESCO.

Keywords: *Azerbaijan culture, globalization, Heydar Aliyev Foundation, universal values, Mehriban Aliyeva.*

In the globalization period a special model of social development combining the unique and universal values, the Azerbaijan model is gradually scaling up and a unique product of a human spirit – Azerbaijan culture is spreading. President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, UNESCO and ISESCO Goodwill Ambassador, MP Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva at the event «Azerbaijan in the junction of cultures and civilizations» devoted to 60th anniversary of UNESCO held in Paris within the framework of the week «Intercultural dialogue» said: «Azerbaijan is a rich ancient land known for its cultural heritage and traditions. Azerbaijan has played for centuries an important role in the inter–civilization dialogues. Our country is at the intersection of East and West. In 1918, the first democratic republic was established just in Azerbaijan. This was the first European type parliamentary republic in all the Islamic world. At the same time, in the Islamic countries opera, ballet, theater, women schools, a free press, equal election rights for men and women for the first time was namely formed in Azerbaijan. Today Azerbaijan has become a modern country that adopted the European values, and she is on the right track. One of the most important factors in the successful development is that Azerbaijan is a secular state and is characterized by her high tolerance. «Indeed, the brilliant sample of the intellectual elite Mehriban Aliyeva creates new perspective ties among the different areas of culture and knowledge, between East and West. The First Lady of Azerbaijan in global understanding of the development of modern vector has repeatedly emphasized in her speeches the importance of the preservation of national traditions. The global nature of Mehriban Aliyeva’s activities creates the opportunity for our culture to become a leading factor and strategic resource for development.

Mehriban Aliyeva has undeniable services in recognition of Azerbaijan culture in foreign countries. Today all Azerbaijan citizens tell this. People living either in small villages or big cities heartily speaks about her. She did it to prove it. She is already widely known in Europe. Articles on the history, culture and art of Azerbaijan, interesting information, exhibits related to the history of Azerbaijan

stored in foreign museums, etc. so far have not been published anywhere yet are published in the pages of the journal «Azerbaijan–Irs (Heritage)» issued in Azerbaijani, English and Russian. The journal that focused on promotion of Azerbaijan culture in foreign countries has gained a wide mass of readers in the international arena. Parallel to the successive activity of the Foundation of Friends of Azerbaijan Culture founded in 1995 Mehriban Aliyeva took the mission of the head of the Azerbaijan Federation of Calisthenics in 2002 and this step introduced her to the Azerbaijan society more closely.

It is not a secret that Heydar Aliyev Foundation was founded in 2004 intended to reflect continuously the great leader's policy, to bring up new generations in the spirit of the ideas of national statehood created by him. This issue was reflected at the opening ceremony of the Foundation by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. Ilham Aliyev said: «The Foundation will study Heydar Aliyev's political heritage, will analyze, research and promote it. The Foundation has been charged with major tasks. The Foundation is a public institution. I believe that the Foundation will have a big role in the public life of Azerbaijan».

Year by year Heydar Aliyev Foundation is developing cooperation with leading international organizations of the world. The Foundation has close cooperation with the UN Development Programme, the UN Population Fund, UNESCO, ISESCO, the United States' «Vital Voice» non-governmental humanitarian organization, «Save the children» and other influential organizations. Heydar Aliyev Foundation is of particular interest in terms of cooperation with UNESCO. The settlement of universal and global problems depends not only on the activities of a separate or the several states, but on the joint efforts of the world states in this direction, therefore there is no need to emphasize day by day increasing role of interstate organizations in the modern period. The main focus of the United Nations, one of the largest and most influential organizations is to protect international peace and security, guided by the principles of equality and self-determination of the people to develop friendly relations among nations, to implement international cooperation in the settlement of economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems. The activities of all other

organizations involved in United Nations and its system serve namely this purpose. And UNESCO is the United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization. UNESCO was established on November 16, 1946. The higher goal of UNESCO is to lay the scientific, educational and cultural bridges among the world countries, and in this way to contribute in strengthening peace and security all over the world. At present, UNESCO, including 193 member states providing an opportunity to its members to train a world-class scientists and teaching staff, as well as offers the opportunity to participate in global scientific projects. After gained independence – July 3, 1992, Azerbaijan is a member of UNESCO. The most important step in the development of relations between UNESCO and Azerbaijan was taken in December 1993, during the Azerbaijan President Heydar Aliyev's official visit to the Republic of France while meeting with the Director-General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor. At the meeting the sides discussed the prospects of expanding UNESCO's relations with Azerbaijan, were exchanged views on the ongoing war in Azerbaijan, the problems of refugees, to eliminate difficulties in the field of science, education, culture caused by war. The national leader who considered the indispensable role of UNESCO for the promotion of Azerbaijan's patterns of culture in the world, development of science and education had realized the importance of the further development of relations and wished with all his heart the youth to work in this field. The worthy successor of Heydar Aliyev's moral and political heritage, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev who has successfully continued his line during his being on the head of the country, on September 15, 2005, taking into account the level of development of mutual relations between UNESCO and the Republic of Azerbaijan signed a decree on additional measures related to the National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO. Under the decree was identified the membership of the National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO. Due to First Lady of Azerbaijan, President of Heydar Aliyev Foundation, Mrs. Aliyeva's efforts, Azerbaijan-UNESCO relations have reached the highest level of development. Since 1995, under the auspices Foundation of Friends of Azerbaijan Culture through organizing festivals, exhibitions, cultural events and concerts Mehriban Aliyeva has

contributed to popularize her country's cultural heritage, promotion, and preservation of it in the national and regional levels. As a logical result of the work carried out, in September, 2004, for her contributions to the development of traditional music, literature and poetry, for her services in the field of musical education and exchange of world cultures and for devotion to UNESCO's ideas Mehriban Aliyeva was honored with the title of Goodwill Ambassador of this organization in the promotion of oral traditions and music.

In fact, searches to save the world go to the earlier times that we can't imagine. So far, for thousands of years, in every corner of the earth a great deal of principles has been suggested to put an end to bloody wars that destroy humanity, the threats of death step by step following individuals, as well as communities, to eliminate the danger of terror that today twined the whole world as a spider's web, to let the humanity breathe freely. Following the failure of the most political ideologies, doctrines, now such a truth is becoming the public opinion of the majority that the world's salvation will be rather achieved just by mutual understanding and the establishment of dialogue between the various civilizations. As UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassador Mehriban Aliyeva bringing different cultures together today is in the first lines of those who endeavor resolutely to save the planet. She successfully carries out the mission entrusted to her. Today, despite that all the world has stepped to the information century, the fantastic achievements in the field of information technology that almost every day cause changes in our lives is considered a progressive trend, this development does not exclude some dangerous trends to the national historical and cultural heritage. Nowadays, finding of the culture of Azerbaijan and in general of the South Caucasus a reliable protector, a savior in the person of UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassador Mehriban Aliyeva can be considered as a gratifying point. She approaches the mission carried out by her as the most important one standing in front of us in the modern world: «Now, in the conditions when mass stereotypes of culture dominate, the preservation of national traditions, taking care of them, well thought-out treatment is extremely important. One of the several objectives of UNESCO is to protect human's spiritual world. Therefore, the

protection of pearls of non-material heritage each of the nations of the planet that reflect more brilliant the national «dignity» is becoming the most urgent task». She has an accurate, purposeful and concrete action plan in order to protect the cultural pearls – the memory of centuries, without any loss to deliver this wealth for future generations. Mehriban Aliyeva's initiative before UNESCO for creation of the organization «the house of Caucasian national traditions» should be considered as a part of this plan. The organization of such a structure promises great benefits in the direction of protection and propagation of the cultural heritage belonging to the Caucasian peoples. At the same time, the initiative is also of a political nature. The creation of «the house of Caucasian national traditions» can contribute significantly to the implementation of the «New Neighborhood Policy» at the initiative of the European Union in the Caucasian region. Though UNESCO is non-political, within the meetings of the organization during the discussions of various problems Mehriban Aliyeva from time to time brings up the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, Azerbaijan realities to the attention of the whole world.

Thanks to Mehriban Aliyeva's toils, the Republic of Azerbaijan has gained great authority in UNESCO. The obvious case to this is the Azerbaijani days at UNESCO on October 20, 2006. It was not an easy task to realize such achievements in a short period of time. Mehriban Aliyeva took part in the event within the framework of the week «The dialogue among the civilizations: Azerbaijan in the crossroads of cultures and civilizations» held under the name «Azerbaijan days» dedicated to the 60th anniversary of UNESCO. Mehriban Aliyeva's speech was greeted heartily at the event. Noting that European values were given preference in Azerbaijan, Mehriban Aliyeva said: «Azerbaijan now has become a modern country that share European values and is on the right track. One of the most important factors for the successful development lies in the fact that Azerbaijan is a secular state and is a country characterized by high tolerance. Historically, Azerbaijan has been a multinational country. Under the constitution all national minorities have equal rights and live as a family. The religious and ethnic tolerance is our wealth and the main elements that we have achieved».

So far the culture of Azerbaijan was known by the peoples of the world. However, it was not so popular. In this sense, Mehriban Aliyeva's services are undeniable. In the popularizing of Azerbaijani mugam in the international level and in the inclusion of it into the list of the UNESCO's world masterpieces of cultural heritage, the Foundation, including its president, Mehriban Aliyeva has an exceptional service. It is no coincidence that the UNESCO heads highly appreciated Mehriban Aliyeva's activity in this area, and in September 2004 she was given the status of UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassador. Taking into account that only 42 people in the world have such an honorable title and M. Aliyeva is one of the three women from the Muslim world that were awarded the title (Princess of the Kingdom of Morocco Lalla Maryam, and the head of one of the world-famous charity organizations «Hariri Foundation», Bahia Hariri, the sister of Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafiz Hariri was honored with this title), and the only woman representative of the Turkic-speaking countries, then can be understood how responsible the position is. First Lady of Azerbaijan is not a promoter of the cultural heritage of only Azerbaijan in this prestigious institution, as well as she fulfills this honorable mission for all Turkic peoples.

Goodwill Ambassador, President of Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the Foundation of Friends of Azerbaijan Culture, Mehriban Aliyeva's activity is highly appreciated not only by our society, but also by international organizations. Mrs. Aliyeva's many-branched activity in the preservation and promotion of the rich Azerbaijani culture, important work in the field of caring sick, lonely, deprived of parental children, as well as her services in the development of education and sports has gained the sympathy of the international community. Let us remember that this activity originated from disinterested service to her nation go with the interests of the region countries and the people of the world. In the XXI century, in the period when the processes of globalization and integration accelerated, the mankind is interested in preserving national values and traditions, immaterial heritage, in the healthy growth and perfect education of future generations.

Experts analyzing her last ten years' activity have come to the conclusion that

the Foundation headed by her stands on the same level with the world's leading charitable Foundations and sometimes exceeds them. This lady working tirelessly day and night admired a number of organizations around the world that had charged public inquiry. Today, thanks to her activities in the most remote areas of the world know the Azerbaijan culture and respect it.

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