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Cultural Organization

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Organización
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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 Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Birth of Ilyas
Afandiyev**

UNESCO, 19 May 2014

Excellency Mr Elchin Afandiyev, Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan,

Mr Anar Karimov, Deputy Permanent Delegate of Azerbaijan,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you to UNESCO to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Ilyas Afandiyev.

I wish to thank Excellency Mr Elchin Afandiyev, Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan, for honouring us with his presence.

Ilyas Afandiyev was an outstanding playwright and writer – most of all, he was a great intellectual and humanist.

This is a source of inspiration for the society of Azerbaijan, and it is source of inspiration for all of us today.

The life and legacy of Ilyas Afandiyev highlight the crucial role played by the artist in modern societies – as a source of ideas and creativity, as a lighthouse for the values we share and seek to uphold.

At a time when all societies are undergoing deep transformation, this role has never been so important – and it is this role that UNESCO seeks to nurture, support and promote.

Ilyas Afandiyev devoted his life to creative activity, to writing plays, novels, short stories and essays.

He shied away from no subjects or themes, even in some very difficult circumstances, and his innovative art form and approach to psychological drama has left a deep mark on generations of writers in Azerbaijan and other regions.

The strength of his work lies in the power of its artistic expression – but also in the spirit and values that animated it, by the message of freedom, tolerance, and human rights that always inspired Ilyas Afandiyev.

As he once said:

The writer should be the owner of a large heart, the high human qualities. Only in this case, the writer can affect the feelings of the people, awake love, compassion and mercy in them.

There is no doubt that Ilyas Afandiyev had such a 'large heart.'

His words remain relevant more than ever today, and they express the core of UNESCO's work to promote culture as a force for development ... as a force for dialogue ... as a force for social cohesion ... as a force to foster participation, to build more just and free societies.

Mr Elchin Afandiyev, I know the legacy of your father is very important to your own inspiration and work as a writer.

You are yourself something of a living classic, if I may say, of Azerbaijani and world literature – you published your first novel at the age of 16 and you have written over 100 books, translated into over 20 languages, and I know your play *My Favourite Madman* premiered last April in London.

Your presence with us today is testimony of the importance of art in Azerbaijan and more widely, as a tool to strengthen citizenship, human dignity and solidarity, as a force of renewal for ourselves as individuals as well as our societies.

This is the message we celebrate tonight.

Mesdames et messieurs,

L'art dramatique d'Ilyas Afandiyev a apporté un nouveau souffle artistique à la littérature et au théâtre de l'Azerbaïdjan, en venant prolonger l'immense tradition littéraire et culturelle de ce pays, comme carrefour d'échange et d'érudition dans toute l'Asie centrale.

Son histoire est celle des routes de la soie, c'est l'histoire de la diversité culturelle comme force de créativité, d'innovation, de dialogue des cultures.

C'est le message que j'ai entendu lors de ma visite l'année dernière à Baku pour le Forum mondial sur le dialogue interculturel.

C'est le message de Mme Mehriban Aliyeva, première dame d'Azerbaïdjan et notre Ambassadrice de Bonne Volonté pour les traditions orales et musicales.

C'est le message du patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'Azerbaïdjan, dans la célébration de Norouz célébrée conjointement avec la Turquie, l'Inde, l'Iran, le Kirghizistan, le Pakistan, l'Ouzbékistan.

L'organisation à Bakou du Comité intergouvernemental pour la sauvegarde du Patrimoine culturel immatériel en décembre dernier reflète la profondeur de l'engagement de l'Azerbaïdjan pour la protection de notre patrimoine commun.

Je tiens à remercier la délégation permanente pour son rôle actif dans l'organisation de manifestations culturelles, dont l'événement de ce soir nous offre un nouvel exemple : musique instrumentale, chant populaire, danse et photographies, c'est un aperçu de diversité culturelle en l'honneur de Ilyas Afandiyev, que nous sommes heureux de célébrer ensemble.