



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
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Organización
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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

Speech by the Assistant Director-General for Culture,

Mr Alfredo Pérez de Armiñán,

on the occasion of the inauguration of the exhibition and book presentation

dedicated to Chovqan, a traditional Karabakh horse-riding game

UNESCO, 6 May 2015

Excellency Ambassador Mr Anar Karimov, Permanent Delegate of Azerbaijan to UNESCO,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Director-General, Ms Irina Bokova, I am delighted to welcome you to the inauguration of this exhibition dedicated to the traditional Karabakh horse-riding game of Chovqan, a living custom and passion shared in the larger region.

At the outset, allow me to thank the Delegation of Azerbaijan for this wonderful initiative, and express my gratitude towards the Heydar Aliyev Foundation for offering us the possibility of appreciating the presented photographs and museum objects which reflect the rich history of Chovqan in Azerbaijan.

In the same spirit, I wish to commend the Government of Azerbaijan for its active support in the implementation of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The principal aim of the Convention is to safeguard intangible cultural heritage for future generations. Since its adoption by the UNESCO General Conference in 2003, countries around the world have been working towards this goal in a spirit of international cooperation.

The practices, representations and skills sustained by cultures are vital contributions to education, resource management, risk management and

democratic governance. Intangible cultural heritage, as a wellspring of creativity and innovation, provides direct access to the accumulated knowledge of peoples: it is a fundamental enabler of sustainable development, and a living resource to address challenges and find appropriate solutions towards peace.

UNESCO advocates for the safeguarding of many different forms of heritage in order to maintain a culturally diverse world. Underlying the Organization's actions in this field is our firm belief that ensuring the long-term survival of humankind's diversity through our shared heritage can contribute to social cohesion and improve the quality of our collective existence.

Today's exhibition is dedicated to 'Chovqan, a traditional Karabakh horse-riding game in the Republic of Azerbaijan', which was as such inscribed as an element on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2013. This inscription illustrates the high importance that the authorities of Azerbaijan, along with the bearers and communities concerned, give to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage threatened by contemporary issues such as urbanization, migration or loss of interest among young generations.

I wish to extend a special welcome to Mr Jean-Louis Gouraud, a renowned French expert and writer among us here today, who will present his book 'The Karabakh Horse' on this special occasion.

I congratulate again the Permanent Delegation of Azerbaijan for organizing this event, and wish you all a pleasant evening!