

Ref ► **Speech - Mr Muzhdad Hasanov, Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See, at the occasion of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe Seminar, part of [iLEGEND III](#): “Reinforcing global competences of education practioners to manage intercultural and interfaith dialogue in contemporary society”, Lisbon, 18 May 2023**

Dear Mrs. Eduarda Marques, Director of the Lisbon Youth Centre;

Dear Mr. Adelino Silva, Executive Director of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to participate in this Thematic Seminar. I would like to thank Council of Europe for providing us with an effective platform to discuss one of the recommendations of 2022 Pan European Congress on Global Education. The Republic of Azerbaijan promotes the development of the knowledge, skills, values and actions that are important for the successful implementation of global education. Despite the negative effects of pandemic, and other challenges the Ministry of Science and Education on its behalf continues to take necessary steps to ensure education to be the driving force for achieving the best practices, where global education stands for.

1. It is clear-cut that education holds key to finding solutions to multiple challenges the human race is faced with. The mission of education includes the tasks of economic nature, that is to train a workforce for needs of economic development. However, the education’s mission cannot and must not be strictly limited along the said lines;
2. To illustrate this point one only has to watch briefly the daily TV news or look through the social media. The news stories bring us reports of conflicts and hate crime, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, racism and discrimination. And the truth is that this news does not come exclusively

from the failed states at the periphery of the Third World. They also arrive from highly developed countries, with strong educational systems.

3. Intercultural and interfaith dialogue between civilizations, a true peace and harmony are based on mutual respect. Respect comes from understanding, and understanding is impossible without knowledge.
4. Here the role of education is hard to over-estimate. A good education must encourage young generations to approach the matters not with pre-judgement but with an open mind, not with suspicion but with curiosity. In order to achieve this goal, true information must be disseminated and acknowledged. It should help us focus on the issues that unite us as humans, instead of stressing the aspects where we might differ.
5. It takes educated citizens to make responsible choices and far-sighted decisions about their common future and to establish a system that reacts adequately to the evolving challenges. Global development requires competent education practitioners with the values of global education, however not to cause losing the local values.
6. On numerous occasions throughout history, education was manipulated in order to achieve certain selfish goals. In many cases, education is still used to promote a one-sided and biased interpretation of history, to stress the exclusiveness of a particular ethnic, or religious, or social group.
7. As a result, it adds fuel to extreme nationalist agendas, creates a syndrome of superiority and image of an enemy. Fake clichés and irrational fears are played up to sow the seeds of enmity, racism, xenophobia and discrimination.
8. I am proud to state that despite of the negative experiences Azerbaijan met, it could not make our nation to renounce the centuries-old traditions of tolerance and respect for other cultures and religions, which we consider to be an integral part of our rich national heritage.

In order to reinforce global competences of education practitioners to manage intercultural and interfaith dialogue, we totally convinced that education plays a vital

role. Using this opportunity, would love to highlight our most notable achievements and taken various steps in this direction:

1. Targets of global education were included into the education standards and curricula at all levels of education;
2. To promote tolerance, peaceful coexistence, subjects "Introduction to Multiculturalism" and "Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism" are taught at the vocational schools, bachelor's and master's level accordingly;
3. In order to increase accessibility for higher education, number of state funded seats for the Azerbaijani students increased to 66.1 percent in compare to statistics of 2019;
4. At the same time, the Government decided to cover the tuition fees for more than 20,000 students from socially vulnerable groups;
5. In order to provide inclusiveness, "State Program for the Development of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2018-2024" ensures quality and inclusive education at all levels;
6. It is wellknown that Azerbaijan is the place where the representatives of the various nations live in secure and harmony. In this regard Azerbaijan ensures the rights of national minorities to study and to teach their native languages. Currently, there are 384 schools where teaching of the languages of national minorities are also included in the program and being taught. Upwards 34000 students study at these schools;
7. Being a part of global education, under the 1st "State Program upwards of 3,500 Azerbaijani youth were provided with merit-based scholarships for studies at the top world universities in the years 2007-2015;
8. In order to contribute to the implementation of innovative teaching and learning technologies, modernization of the content and quality indicators of the higher education system the 2nd State Program for 2019-2023 was adopted. Upwards 200 young Azerbaijani researchers awarded scholarship to study at the 80 top-ranked universities of the 22 countries. Besides, 4 leading foreign universities such as George Washington

University of US, Inha University of South Korea, Ege University of Turkiye do double diploma projects with local Azerbaijani partners in framework of this Program;

9. Under the 3rd State Program up to 370 students awarded a scholarship to study in the bachelor and master degree programs of the world's top universities.
10. Currently, upwards 10 thousand international students from 110 countries study at the higher education institutions of Azerbaijan, which also puts value to the diversification of the academic climate. To provide accessibility to higher education, last 5 years Azerbaijan awarded 200 education grants to the citizens of member countries of NAM and OIC. In the framework of implementation of Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Ministry covered the expenses of two refugee students studying at university. We do believe that internationalized higher education system can contribute increase of intercultural and interfaith dialogue. Newly implemented Study in Azerbaijan-Centralized Admission E-System is eager to host a lot of international students.
11. At the same time, Azerbaijan also contributes to the international development process. In this regard, Azerbaijan builds a school for the State of Palestine in 2023.

In the conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to organizers. Strongly believe that only by uniting our efforts, member states of Council of Europe, in our turn as a members of North-South Centre can address root causes of intercultural and interfaith dialogue and ensure effective national responses to reinforce global competences of education practitioners in this regard.

Thank you for your attention!

Wish you all a very productive seminar!