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The purpose of the visit is to discuss the possibilities of expanding cooperation in the field of education at the Azerbaijani-Italian Inter-University Forum.

Before the Forum, M. Jabbarov met with Azerbaijani students, studying in Italy, at the Azerbaijan's pavilion in the "Expo Milano 2015" international exhibition. During the meeting, the topical issues related to education and living conditions of Azerbaijani students in this country were discussed. The Minister of Education underlined that Azerbaijani students should worthily represent Azerbaijan in foreign universities where they study and should be active in bringing the truth about our country to Italians.

Then, the Azerbaijani-Italian Inter-University Forum was launched with the support of the Ministry of Education.

The event was attended by Vagif Sadigov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Italy, representatives of higher education institutions and education ministries of both countries.

The purpose of the Forum is to expand the existing relations between higher education institutions of Azerbaijan and Italy, to establish new contacts, to discuss pressing issues, to evaluate the opportunities for exchange of experience and implementation of joint programs.

Opening the event, Mikayil Jabbarov, Minister of Education, expressed his gratitude to the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) for the support in organizing the Forum. Noting that Azerbaijan has been one of the knowledge and creativity centers since ancient times, the Minister spoke about the important contributions of our country to education, literature and art.

M. Jabbarov noted that sustainable socio-economic development and improving the living standards of the population are the priorities in Azerbaijan. He also emphasized that these directions were reflected in the Development Concept "Azerbaijan 2020: Vision of the Future" approved by Azerbaijani President Ilhami Aliyev. Speaking about the main stages of the development after the restoration of state independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Minister noted that the best results were achieved in state construction, social and political stability, poverty reduction and other fields.

The Minister spoke about the importance of the education system in the direction of enriching human capital. He also mentioned that the "National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan", adopted in October, 2013, is one of the most important steps in the development of this field. At the same time, large-scale, deliberate reforms are carried out at all levels of education. One of the important directions in the field of higher education is the functioning of higher education institutions within the framework of the Bologna process in Azerbaijan and establishment of new financing and management system in universities. These development trends make it necessary to expand international relations in the field of education.

M. M. Jabbarov said that more than 3 thousand 500 students had an opportunity to study at the world's leading higher education institutions within the framework of the state programs on education of Azerbaijani youth abroad. Moreover, it was planned to invite outstanding professors and researchers from the universities and academies of different countries to higher education institutions in Azerbaijan. It will ensure the development of the education system of our country and will increase the competitiveness. The extensive cooperation was established among the higher educational institutions of Azerbaijan and

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Italy in various fields. The Chairs of Azerbaijani studies, research centers related to our country function at several universities of Italy. At the same time, joint programs are implemented with a number of higher education institutions of Europe in Azerbaijan.

Federico Cinquepalmi, Head of Internationalization of Higher Education Office of the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), spoke about the enhancement of inter-university cooperation between the two countries. He said that Italy attaches great importance to expansion of relations with Azerbaijan in this direction. In this regard, special attention should be paid to the existing relations between the universities of the two countries. The Education Ministries of the two countries are able to achieve success by implementing joint projects and measures. After that, it is important to implement several measures for the expansion of cooperation in all directions and in the field of education between the two countries with similar and ancient culture.

Then, the first panel meeting on the theme "Student mobility and bilateral cooperation" started. Speaking at the meeting, Abel Maharramov, Rector of Baku State University, Farah Aliyeva, Rector of Azerbaijan State University of Culture and Art, Vincenzo Scotti, President of the "Link Campus" University operating in Rome, Antonello Biagi, Vice-Rector of the University of La Sapienza, discussed issues such as student exchange, expansion of relations between the higher education institutions of the two countries and implementation of new joint projects.

During the second panel meeting on the theme "Role of dual degree programs in strengthening cooperation between universities", Adalat Muradov, Rector of Azerbaijan State Economic University, Gulchohra Mammadova, Rector of the Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction, Mario Panizza, Rector of Roma Tre University, Maurizio Memo, Vice-Rector of the University of Brescia, emphasized the importance of these measures in terms of becoming familiar with the education system of both countries and conducting the exchange of experiences.

The event continued with discussions.

Then, they reviewed the Azerbaijan's pavilion in the "Expo Milano 2015" international exhibition. It was noted that the pavilion entitled "The treasure of biodiversity" provided an opportunity for visitors to get acquainted with ancient history, rich cultural heritage, economic and cultural potential of Azerbaijan.

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**Milan**