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Role of the NGOs in fostering inter-civilisation dialogue/Heydar Aliyev Foundation

Written Declaration No 397

This written declaration commits only the members who have signed it

Whereas the issue of promoting dialogue between civilisations and cultures is high on the priority agenda of the European as well as the world community;

Whereas tolerance, both inter-ethnic and inter-religious, is an inalienable part of this dialogue;

Whereas the role of non-governmental organisations in the process is indispensable on both national and international levels;

Whereas the predominantly Muslim and highly secular Republic of Azerbaijan has been historically known for its traditions of ethnic and religious diversity and tolerance;

Whereas the Azerbaijani Government's policy of promoting this diversity and opposing all forms of xenophobia and religious intolerance has been recognised by the international community on numerous occasions;

We, the undersigned, hereby emphasise the activity and experience of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, the largest and most influential NGO in Azerbaijan, in the area of promoting inter-ethnic and inter-religious understanding, namely by:

- conducting numerous forums and conferences, also international, on inter-cultural and inter-civilisation dialogue;
- supporting, within the framework of Religious Address – Azerbaijan project, the restoration of an Orthodox church in Baku;
- construction of a Jewish cultural complex in Baku to include a secondary school, kindergarten and Jewish Historical and Cultural Museum, in co-operation with the Or Avner International Foundation;
- supporting, within the framework of Religious Address – Azerbaijan project, the restoration of several mosques in Baku;

- printing Georgian-language textbooks for Georgian schools in Azerbaijan;
- plans for conducting in 2008, in co-operation with UNESCO, a regional educational conference in Baku;
- restoration of two statues on the World Cultural Heritage list in Versailles, France.

It is our opinion that this activity in the Azerbaijan-based Heydar Aliyev Foundation should be commended and made subject to a wider international study as a positive contribution to the ongoing inter-civilisation dialogue.

*Signed:*¹

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¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group

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