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**BRITISH FOUNDATION FOR STUDY OF AZERBAIJAN AND CAUCASUS PRESENTED IN LONDON**

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London hosted the official presentation of the British Foundation for the Study of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus ([www.bfsac.org.uk](http://www.bfsac.org.uk)), established on September 27, 2016, where the British and Azerbaijani public was told about the directions of activity of the new academic structure. The Foundation will support academic projects in the field of Caucasian studies in order to ensure their duration, success, viability and access to the international level.

The rector of the Baku branch of the Lomonosov Moscow State University, the head of the Nizami Ganjavi Scientific Center at the University of Oxford, the head of the British Foundation for Study of Azerbaijan and Caucasus, the member of Russian Academy of Science, Doctor of Philology, Professor Nargiz Pashayeva, speaking with a correspondent of Vestnik Kavkaza, stressed that for the first time since the republic regained its independence, the Azerbaijani scientists have received an opportunity for an academic dialogue at the level of the best University in the UK. "It makes us believe that the future of the British-Azerbaijani scientific ties will continue to grow. The most important thing is that our work will not turn into a project with short term or insignificant effect: we believe that the Foundation, which we have created and presented, will support our research projects," she said.

Nargiz Pashayeva noted that academic ties in the modern world are the most robust and stable. "The world is changing, there are all sorts of mutually exclusive events on the daily basis, but science brings people together, gives them a common platform, as mankind always tries to keep the good and fight the negative. The great achievement of the United Kingdom is that many cultures have found their second home here. A lot of ancient Azerbaijani manuscripts and historical books about Azerbaijan are kept at the University of Oxford. I hope that this project is not just a fad: I think we will become part of the University of Oxford forever," the head of the Nizami Ganjavi Scientific Center noted.

Director of the Nizami Ganjavi Scientific Center of Azerbaijan and Caucasian Studies at the University of Oxford, member of the Board of Trustees of the British Foundation for Study of Azerbaijan and Caucasus, Professor Robert Hoyland pointed to the uniqueness of the Nizami Ganjavi Centre and the presented Foundation. "This institution is the first structure of its kind, exploring not only the current stage of the Azerbaijani culture, but also its history in general. We hope that it will contribute to the development of the British-Azerbaijani relations. Of course, Azerbaijan is our friendly country, we have a long history of relations. This cooperation project will open more wide and deep historical ties between our countries," he expects.

"The Oxford Center of Nizami Ganjavi is aimed at continuation of studying the history of Azerbaijan, including through excavation. Now we are digging in Barda, which was the capital of Caucasian Albania in the late period of the Roman Empire. We attract students to study the history and culture of Azerbaijan and its surrounding areas. I am sure that in the future there will be very fruitful and positive relations between our two countries, and I hope that today we made another step towards it," Robert Hoyland added.

A member of the House of Lords, the Council of Europe rapporteur on Azerbaijan in 2003-2006, the member of the Board of Trustees of the British Foundation for Study of Azerbaijan and Caucasus, Malcolm Bruce, stressed that it is an honor for him - to participate in the creation of the Foundation. "Its main objective is the cultural exchange between the UK, Azerbaijan and the Caucasus as a whole. The Foundation sees its mission as uniting people, studying the history of this stunning region, which is not yet well researched in the UK, as well as its culture, music, literature and poetry. The Foundation will maintain a fundamental exchange of ideas in the field of history, culture and archaeology between the scientific communities of the two countries," he said.

"I have been engaged in cooperation with Azerbaijan for 15 years, and I firmly believe that it is a country with a very clear identity. I especially like that Azerbaijan is a secular Muslim country. I was able to communicate with people from different layers of the Azerbaijani society, and they are really proud of their tolerance, freedom from prejudice and respect for other religions. We want people to understand the history and culture of Azerbaijan, around which there are so many problems and conflicts, and, therefore, our Foundation is based on a combination of people, ideas, cultures, histories and values □□□□ we share. For example, the civilizations existed in the fifth century have been discovered due to our excavations, although it was believed that they lived in the Middle Ages. It's amazing, fascinating and important - and we want our Foundation to be engage in it" the Lord Bruce said.

President of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) Akif Alizadeh called organisation of the joint work of the Nizami Ganjavi Scientific Center and the the British Foundation for the Study of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus a significant event. "This tandem will be a breakthrough of Azerbaijani science and culture into the European zone, and then, probably, all over the world. We believe that it is very important in terms of promoting achievements of the humanities and poetry," he said.

Akif Alizadeh appreciated the role of Professor Nargiz Pashayeva and Professor Robert Hoyland in the implementation of this event. "A huge role in this was played by a corresponding member of our Academy, Professor Nargiz Pashayeva and Professor at the University of Oxford Robert Hoyland, who founded the Nizami Ganjavi Scientific Center and the British Foundation for the Study of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus. Today, these structures are a good window into the

European Science and culture for Azerbaijani scientists. This important event is even more significant, because it is happening on the eve of the 100th anniversary of the creation of the first in the East, Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which means that it is a propaganda of Azerbaijani multiculturalism," the president of ANAS pointed out.

Professor of Persian Studies at the University of Oxford, Edmund Herzig, told about his five years of working with Nargiz Pashayeva and the Baku branch of the Lomonosov Moscow State University. "Our goal is to establish the studies of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus region at the University of Oxford as a whole. This project is very attractive for us, and today's event is so important , because we understand how complex and diverse the Caucasus is. We think that it makes sense to study the Caucasus in connection within itself and with other regions," he noted.

"For three years we have developed this project. We supported several students who wanted to carry out the Caucasian studies, and got very interesting results in the course of archaeological excavations in Barda. We also held a few round tables: two years ago we held a seminar on the East Caucasus in the period from late antiquity to the early Islam, and last year we hosted a conference on the trans-Caspian links," Edmund Herzig said.

The professor noted that working with experts in related fields allows you to show them the need to study Azerbaijan. "If you show scientists the links between the bases of history and culture of different countries, the relevance and significance of Azerbaijani studies will be apparent. We expect from today's event that current projects will become a permanent part of our research, and the 10-year program of studies of Azerbaijan will be integrated into the University of Oxford's work," he said.

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