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MEHRIBAN ALIYEVA IS CONFERRED ON A HIGH ORDER OF THE EUROPEAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEES

"On January 21, a regular sitting of the European Olympic Committees' Executive Committee took place in Lausanne city of Switzerland.

At the sitting, Azerbaijan's First Lady, head of the Baku-2015 first European Games' Organizing Committee Mehriban Aliyeva was conferred on the High Order - the highest award of the European Olympic Committee - by a decision of the European Olympic Committees' Executive Committee, for her special services to the development of sports in Europe.

It is by no chance that the regular sitting of the European Olympic Committees' Executive Committee took place in Lausanne, since this city has been known as the "Olympic Capital" of the world. The headquarters of the International Olympic Committee, established in 1894 by Pierre de Coubertin, and head offices of a number of international sports federations are located in Lausanne.

Mehriban Aliyeva arrived at the International Olympic Committee, where the sitting of the European Olympic Committees' Executive Committee took place.

Speaking at the event, head of the Olympic Solidarity Movement Pere Miro greeted Mehriban Aliyeva and expressed his delight of seeing her at this ceremony. He said:

- It is great pleasure for me to welcome you to your home. You know that your home is the Olympic Home. The International Olympic Committee is extremely happy to host this meeting. This meeting is of great significance for all of us, since this is the culminating point of the first European Games, which were a great success. On this occasion, I would like to congratulate the European Olympic Committee and the Organizing Committee. The whole world recognized these Games' significance and Azerbaijan's holding the Games on high level.

President of the European Olympic Committee Patrick Hickey informed the attendees of the ceremony of Mehriban Aliyeva's biography, who was conferred on the High Order. He talked about Mehriban Aliyeva's activities as a public figure, and emphasized that she has headed holding of a number of European- and world-scale sports events in the capacity of the president of the National Gymnastics Federation. Patrick Hickey said Mehriban Aliyeva has led implementation of a number of huge projects

as the president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, and was conferred on reputable world awards. UNESCO and ISESCO goodwill ambassador, Mehriban Aliyeva has been honoured with high state awards by presidents of France, Pakistan, Serbia and Poland. Moreover, she has been honoured with an award by the World Health Organization, "Golden Heart" international award, and other prizes. She was the chairperson of the Eurovision Song Contest's Organizing Committee in 2012. At the moment, she is the chairperson of the Islamic Solidarity Games' Organizing Committee, to be held in Baku in 2017. Patrick Hickey noted also that Mehriban Aliyeva, conferred on the order "Heydar Aliyev" for the high-level organization of the first European Games, was presented the special honorary award "Olympic Excellence" of the International Olympic Academy at the 54th International Session of the International Olympic Academy's Young Participants in Athens in 2014.

Then the High Order – the highest award of the European Olympic Committees – was presented to Mehriban Aliyeva for her special services to the development of sports in Europe.

Mehriban Aliyeva addressed the ceremony.

Patrick Hickey said the first European Games were held on high level in Azerbaijan's capital, and emphasized that the beauty of Baku and, especially, hospitality of our people has made a great impression on him. He emphasized President Ilham Aliyev's merits in high-level holding of these Games that took place for the first time in European history and, asking to convey his greetings to the Head of the Azerbaijani State, said:

- The beauty of Baku amazed my European colleagues. They were astonished at the hospitality of the Azerbaijani people and your very high-level organization of these Games. They still note this with amusement. In conclusion, I would like to thank one very respectable person. It is your husband, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. He is a far-sighted brilliant person, and all these would not happen without his support. We kindly ask you to convey our thanks to him. I know that he is in Davos now. Please convey our best wishes to him.

Mehriban Aliyeva said:

- Mister President, thank you. The Azerbaijani President too asked me to convey his greetings to you. I would like to once more thank you for these kind words. I would like to say that this was a great experience for me. I'm extremely happy to have found a lot of new friends and obtained much information. This is very useful for my daily activities. I would like to one more note that we would be always very pleased to see you in Azerbaijan. You are true friends of Azerbaijan. We are always pleased to see you in our country. Thank you.

Then demonstration of a film about the first European Games took place. Different shots from the Games' opening ceremony were shown, interesting moments observed at venues where sports competitions were held and images reflecting winners-sportsmen's joy were presented to the attendees of the ceremony. The closing ceremony of the first European Games too was shown, and the moments that European spectators watched with much interest were revived again.

Minister of Youth and Sports Azad Rahimov, Vice-president of the National Olympic Committee Chingiz Huseynzadeh and Vice-president of the Gymnastics Federation Altay Hasanov too attended the event. It should be noted that so far President of the International Olympic Committee Tomas Bach, chairperson of the London Olympic Games Organizing Committee Sebastyancko and other influential sports figures were awarded this prize."