On 4 June, the delegation visited La Sapienza University, which is one of the ancient and largest universities of Europe with 140 000 students, and met with Rector Luigi Frati. Next, the members of delegation have held a meeting with Rector and deans of university faculties.

The meeting was attended by members of delegation of La Sapienza University, who visited Baku in October last year in order to become acquainted with universities of Azerbaijan. They expressed their satisfaction with meetings held at universities of Azerbaijan, and stressed their interest in continuing the cooperation.

According to Rector of University La Sapienza Luigi Frati, the University gives a high priority to fields, such as biotechnology, veterinary, chemistry, nanotechnology, archeology, economic and law. Currently, an extensive scientific research on the theme of Civil rights in Russia and South Korea is being held at university. Moreover, there is special attention paid to the economic management field as well. Mr. Frati added that the signature of cooperation agreement with universities of Azerbaijan will have a positive impact on the development of bilateral relations.

The Rector said that English Department at medicine and economics faculties of the University will be opened in the current academic year to increase the number of overseas students. He underlined he will very pleased if Azeri students will study at these two faculties.

Touching upon distance education issues, the Rector noted that if the official agreement will be signed then young people of Azerbaijan will be able to study at their University, receive a PhD degree or do scientific researches along with their Italian colleagues through the Internet. Moreover, it was noted that currently, more than 4 000 researchers are doing their scientific research for PHD degree at university.

Education Minister noted with pleasure that Italy was one of the first countries that recognized the independence of Azerbaijan in 1919 and stressed the existence of a broad cooperation between the two countries in all areas. According to him, Italy is also the biggest trade partner of Azerbaijan.

The Minister underlined the existence of great opportunities to use a potential in the education field that was not fully used by the sides. He noted that Azerbaijan Medical University and Italian University of Genoa have successfully cooperated within the Tempus and Erasmus – Mundus programs of European Union. Moreover, the cooperation agreements have been signed with 3 universities of Azerbaijan and soon necessary measures will be taken to register the relationship with Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction and Azerbaijan Technical University officially.

Noting Department of Italian Studies is operated at University of Languages of Azerbaijan, the Minister talked about interest of Azeri people in learning Italian language and culture. He talked about his meeting with Ambassador of Italy to Azerbaijan before his visit to Italy and underlined that by the support of Italian Embassy necessary measures will be taken to organize the teaching of Italian language at some schools of Azerbaijan.

Next, Mr. Mardanov gave information on achievements of Azerbaijan in the education field after the country joined to the Bologna system in 2005, and talked about works that will be done within this process. He added that La Sapienza University meets all requirements to be included in the priority list of universities, where young people of Azerbaijan are studying.

Moreover, the sides have discussed an issue of conducting short-term education management courses for members of delegation, and Rector of La Sapienza University has instructed relevant persons to send the list of main specialties to the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan as soon as possible.

Next, the Minister noted the importance of establishing Department for Azerbaijani Studies at La Sapienza University as a result of development of educational relationship between the two countries. According to him, full support will be provided for the establishment and development of department. The Minister has also invited Mr. Frati to visit Baku in September of the current year to take part in the

conference organized to celebrate the 20th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Italy.

Mr. Frati expressed his gratitude for the invitation and noted such visit would be very useful to become more familiar with universities of Azerbaijan and promote the cooperation.

At the end Mr. Frati expressed his deep appreciation to the Minister of Education Misir Mardanov for his support and assistance to increasing interest of Azeri people in universities of Italy and Italian language.

It should be noted that a cooperation agreement was signed between La Sapienza University and the number of Azeri universities. The contribution of Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Italy Mr. Vagif Sadigov and staff of the Embassy to this issue is should be especially stressed. Currently, preparation works are carried out to sign an official cooperation agreement with Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction and Azerbaijan Technical University.

On June 5, the delegation met with Education Minister of Italy Francesco Profumo, where Mr. Mardanov has talked about the cooperation existing between Azerbaijan and Italy in all fields, underlined the respect of our people to Italy and Italians creates a basis to expand bilateral relations in the education field.

Speaking about the works that will be done to promote existing relations and cooperation, Mr. Mardanov underlined the Department of Azerbaijani Studies that planning to be established at La Sapienza University might become a relationship centre between Azerbaijan and Italy. The Minister gave information on the State Program for study abroad and underlined the need to increase the number of Azeri students at universities of Italy. He added that the Government of Azerbaijan could also provide a scholarship for this purpose.

Education Minister stressed the importance of expanding direct relations between scientists of both countries, and organizing the trip of students during the summer vacation. He talked about discussions held with the Ambassador of Italy to Azerbaijan regarding the teaching of Italian language at secondary schools of Azerbaijan.

Education Minister of Italy Francesco Profumo has thanked the Minister for the attention paid to the issue of learning Italian language and culture in Azerbaijan. He underlined the importance of informing Italian community about Azerbaijan. He also touched upon an issue regarding the learning of Azeri language and history at La Sapienza University and underlined that full support will be provided to establish a relationship in the other fields of education.

Next, the sides have discussed issues (such as student exchange, joint scientific researches, conduction of scientific conferences, symposiums) pointed out in the agreement on science, culture and technology singed between the ministers of education of the both countries in 2005. There were noted the need to coordinate the relations established between Azerbaijan National Archive Department and Archival Institution of Florence. They also discussed the establishment of links between Azerbaijan National Archive Department and universities of Italy.

Misir Mardanov suggested establishing a Working Group on education between Azerbaijan and Italy.

At the meeting the sides have also discussed an issue regarding the recognition of educational documents between Azerbaijan and Italy.

At the end, Mr. Mardanov invited his Italian colleague Francesco Profumo to visit Baku in September of the current year to participate in the conference organized to celebrate the 20th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Italy.

Mr. Profumo has thanked the Minister and gladly accepted the invitation.

On June 5, there was held a meeting with Azeri students studying in Italy.

During the meeting, the Minister talked with students, asked them about their study and reminded them that they are bearing special responsibilities to deliver the realities of Azerbaijan to the world.

At the same day, the Minister met with President of Dante Alighieri Institution Bruno Bottai and executive director Alessandro Mazzi.

On June 6, the delegation met with Chairman of the Italian Senate Committee on Culture, Research and Education and Coordinator of Cooperation Group for UNESCO Senator Guido Possa.

At the meeting, Education Minister Misir Mardanov talked about successful development of political and economic relationship between Azerbaijan and Italy. He noted that the goal of his visit is to expand links with universities of Italy. Moreover, the Minister touched upon issues regarding the teaching of Italian in Azerbaijan and works that will be implemented to take them more seriously and extensively. He also underlined the importance of extending the cooperation within programs of European Union.

Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Italy Vagif Sadiqov underlined the high level of relationship between the two countries.

Senator Guido Possa has thanked for contributions made to keep the existing relations between the two countries at a high level. He promised to support Azerbaijan in all fields as a Chairman of 7th Standing Committee on Education, Cultural Properties, Scientific Research, Entertainment and Sport and make effort to develop inter-university relations.

According to him, Azerbaijan is the economically and politically strongest country in the region among member countries of Eastern Partnership. The Senator underlined the need to establish Azerbaijan – Italy Friendship Group. Noting Azerbaijan is young country and walking confidently into the future, Senator Possa stressed the possibility to implement the projects for teaching Azeri language in Italy.

At the end, Education Minister Misir Mardanov has thanked Senator Guido Possa and members of Senate for organizing a high-level meeting.