



**A Message
from the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson
to the
Responsible Fisheries Workshop IV
London
3 February 2011**

Distinguished participants
Dear friends

It was my intention to be with you today and participate in your workshop on responsible fisheries and the importance of trade in fish products, the cornerstone of Icelandic-UK economic ties, our strong commercial bond which is rooted in a long history and will be of even greater relevance in the years to come.

Obligations here in Iceland, however, brought about a change in my schedule so I cannot now have the pleasure and the benefit of your wisdom and advice. Perhaps we can find a future date for another meeting, since the sustainable and responsible utilisation of marine resources, and fish marketing, are extremely important issues; high on my agenda.

For me personally, such encounters are always rewarding; they remind me of my upbringing in Iceland's West Fjords fishing communities where I received my first earned income, working during the school holidays in the local fish factory sorting salted cod and preparing it for export to the Italian baccalà market.

I have now just returned from the World Economic Forum in Davos, where I participated in three sessions on the future of the oceans, the utilisation of marine resources and on sustainable and profitable fisheries. The World Economic Forum has decided to concentrate in the next few years on these important issues, to increase their priority within its broad portfolio.

This is the first time that the World Economic Forum has put the oceans and the future of fisheries on its agenda; a significant indication of how important these concerns have become.

In the discussions in Davos it was made clear by many that access to fish products from sustainable fisheries provides a competitive advantage in global food markets, especially in countries where the consumers are increasingly conscious of environmental issues and product origins.

These developments are, of course, highly relevant to Iceland and our trading partners in the fishing sector, and in recent years we have witnessed their emerging significance.

In Britain, throughout Europe and in other parts of the world, Iceland's record of sustainable fisheries is well known; an achievement which did not come easy and had to evolve through challenging stages, but is now among our major assets in the global economy.

In that important history, our trading partnership with many companies in the United Kingdom has played a significant role and now serves as the basis for new and fascinating opportunities.

It is important that we realise how well-placed our partnership is with respect to the evolution of both UK and global markets; what a privilege it is to be able to offer good fish products to consumers and thus improve their health and well-being, knowing that we are at the same time working in harmony with Mother Nature.

This joint spirit of sustainability and mutual business benefits is the hallmark of the Icelandic-UK trade in fish products and will be our strongest competitive advantage in the years to come.

I hope that your deliberations will serve to further these shared goals and I look forward to learning more about the outcome of your meeting.