

**DECLARATION**  
**BY**  
**THE PRESIDENT OF ICELAND**

On the occasions that I have referred legislation to the nation under Article 26 of the Constitution, it has concerned fundamental aspects of Iceland's democratic structure or its economic independence.

The utilisation of the nation's principal natural resources, both as regards the catch system and payment for the use of the resource is, in a certain way, a comparable fundamental issue.

The Catch Fees Act which the Althingi has now passed does not change the catch system, and both ordinary catch fees and special catch fees will continue to be paid to the nation. Total payments for the use of our fisheries resources will come to about ISK 10 billion during the coming year.

In its main substance, the Act means that the planned increase will not be implemented and that there will be a change in the rates applied to pelagic and demersal catches. Fees paid by individual operators will be higher in some cases and lower in others. Moreover, one of the premises of the Act is that it will be reviewed by the next parliament.

Thus, the Act does not involve any fundamental change in the utilisation of the resource; it provides for temporary changes in payments made to the state in the form of taxes on utilisation. To submit legislation of this type to a referendum would set a precedent with great implications equal to a new approach to taxation, with referendums on increases or reductions in individual revenue items in the state budget; a decision which would have to follow extensive debate and an extremely broad expression of the people's will.

I have therefore decided to confirm the Act, but at the same time I repeat the call to the authorities, the Althingi and the Government, to make every effort in the proposed review of this legislation to obtain a broad and permanent national consensus on catch fees and the payment of dividends to the nation; the number of signatures to the petition submitted in connection with the Catch Fees Act demonstrates that the public has a strong desire and sense of justice regarding these issues.

Consensus on the utilisation of Iceland's principal resources is both the basis for our future prosperity and the moral duty of us all.

Bessastaðir, 9 July 2013

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson