



**A Speech
by
the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson
at the
Brandenburg Gate
The World Championships of the Icelandic Horse
Berlin
4 August 2013**

Sehr geehrter Herr Bürgermeister
Freunde des Islandpferdes
Riders and participants

After serving the people of Iceland for more than a thousand years, bringing farmers across mountains and valleys, up to the volcanoes and close to the glaciers, across rivers and deserts; honoured by poets and painters, the strong, colourful, energetic, high-spirited Icelandic horse has now finally come to the Brandenburg Gate, this famous monument at the heart of Europe, a symbol of unity, freedom and democracy.

For the people of Iceland the horse was for centuries the means of survival and transport; allowed each and every one to ride to the Parliament at Thingvellir; linked isolated farms into a community of neighbours; indeed, allowed the nation to become one.

In recent decades we have been honoured to share the love of the Icelandic horse with admirers from so many countries, to gain friends in Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, among the Nordic nations and elsewhere through our shared admiration for the horse, and our appreciation of everything it represents, how it enriches our sense of culture through paintings, pictures and poems.

I thank the City of Berlin, the organisers in Germany and the delegations from other countries for mounting these extraordinary World Championships.

For Dorrit and me it is a great pleasure to join you all and to return to Berlin in the company of Icelandic horses and their riders so soon after our State Visit. Thus, we demonstrate once again the close friendship between our countries and, of course, this gives Dorrit the opportunity to ride with you to the most famous gate in Europe.

As we now move on to the formal opening of the World Championships we leave the Brandenburg Gate inspired by a unique event in the centuries-old history of the Icelandic horse.