



**Speech**  
**by**  
**the President of Iceland**  
**Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson**  
**at the opening of**  
**the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arctic Circle Assembly**  
**Reykjavík**  
**16 October 2015**

Your Serene Highness  
Prime Ministers  
Ministers  
Your Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen  
Dear friends

I welcome you all to the Arctic Circle and thank you for making the Assembly the largest annual international gathering on the Arctic, dedicated to an open and democratic dialogue where national and global leaders, scientists, experts, officials, entrepreneurs, business executives, environmentalists, activists, indigenous representatives and concerned citizens, young and old, come together to share ideas, experience and visions, projects and plans.

With your involvement we have in just two years succeeded in giving the world a new and unique platform to examine and structure our present and future actions in the Arctic; succeeded in sending a powerful message that together we are determined to be responsible as guardians and users of this huge part of our planet, the northernmost global homeland which embraces the top of the Earth from Alaska across Canada and Greenland, includes Iceland and the other Nordic states, ranges through the North Atlantic and other Polar oceans across the seven time zones of the Russian North, its easternmost region linking arms with Alaska; thus completing the planetary Arctic circle.

The presence here today of delegations from leading economies of Europe and Asia, as well as the largest Arctic states, of representatives from prominent scientific institutions and global environmental organisations, participants from regions and communities across the Arctic – 1,900 participants from more than 50 countries – is a clear demonstration that our cooperation has indeed become truly global.

The core of the Arctic Circle is open democratic dialogue, where each and every one has the right to be heard; a vision inspired by the challenges we all face in coming years and decades.

As a prelude to the December climate negotiations in Paris, President François Hollande will arrive in a few hours, straight from the European Summit, to deliver here today a keynote speech on how the future of the Arctic reflects the fate of the Earth's climate.

The President of China, Xi Jinping and the Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel have mandated special delegations to this Assembly to present the Arctic policies, projects and vision of their respective countries. The United States, the Chair country of the Arctic Council, and Russia, the largest Arctic state, will, through high-level representatives and political leaders, present their respective Arctic policies on Saturday and Sunday.

Environmental organizations like the World Wildlife Fund, the European Climate Foundation and others, will highlight their lessons and warnings; science and research as always the guiding theme in all our discussions. Representatives of Guggenheim are outlining plans for wide-ranging public-private partnerships in creating new financial instruments for the evolution of Arctic infrastructure; bringing also a proposal for an Arctic investment protocol.

These, and many others, will constitute our plenary sessions and, in addition, various organisations and associations, universities, think-tanks, companies, governments and regional authorities are in charge of 70 breakout sessions, demonstrating that the Arctic Circle has truly become a multi-dimensional platform of wide-ranging global cooperation.

Furthermore, the Republic of Korea has in a great spirit of joyful generosity decided to invite all of us tomorrow to a Korean night here in Harpa with dancers and music.

This year, we have also launched smaller and more specialized gatherings, titled Arctic Circle Forums; the first one took place in August in Alaska in cooperation with a variety of local partners, and was dedicated to Arctic ports and shipping.

The second Forum will be in Singapore next month, co-hosted by the Singapore Maritime Institute, with new sea routes, infrastructure investment, science and Arctic governance as its main themes.

The third Arctic Circle Forum will be held in Quebec in March next year, organized in cooperation with Premier Philippe Couillard whom I now welcome to the Honorary Board of the Arctic Circle; a Forum devoted to regional plans in the Arctic in the light of the success of Quebec's Plan Nord.

The fourth Arctic Circle Forum will take place in Greenland in May, aimed at a dialogue between indigenous and regional leaders, organized in close cooperation with the Government of Greenland.

We have in recent months explored actively the establishment of special task forces aimed at furthering cooperation on concrete projects and plans, embracing our pan-Arctic vision of the future.

The Arctic Circle Assemblies will, of course, continue to take place here in Harpa every October, and the dates for the next three years are announced on the back page of your programme.

Yes, our work is indeed evolving and I thank warmly and sincerely the staff of the Arctic Circle Secretariat and all those who have helped in preparing this Assembly and other Arctic Circle events. Their work has been splendid; their dedication outstanding.

With these words I welcome you all and thank each and every one of you for your contribution to the success of the Arctic Circle; it has indeed been, and will continue to be, a joint endeavour in our common journey towards a responsible Arctic future and a sustainable world.

I now invite Alice Rogoff and Frederik Paulsen to chair the opening session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arctic Circle Assembly.