



**A Greeting
from
the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson**

Festivals of song in which numerous choirs from the Nordic and Baltic countries join forces are a vibrant manifestation of rich musical traditions which are rooted in our respective cultures and histories.

For more than a century now, choral singing has played a large role in the friendly relations between the Nordic countries, and in times of oppression and difficulty it gave expression to the yearning for freedom in the Baltic States, becoming a symbol of independence and victory in the struggle towards democracy.

Singing has been a bond between the generations; it has revealed to the young a new understanding of the legacy of their native communities and choirs have provided composers with a fertile field for their art.

Choirs have been a formative influence on the social life of every district in Iceland: male choirs, women's choirs, mixed choirs; church choirs, children's choirs, school choirs and other combinations in the rich range of social groups that choral singing calls into being. It is a great pleasure for the community of Icelandic choirs to welcome you all who have made the long journey to the land of ice and fire, where the forces of nature have recently given us such a vivid reminder of their power.

It is also a pleasure for the people of Iceland to see so many choirs from the Nordic and Baltic States, our long-standing friends, coming to our country for this festival, where you will rehearse together and get to know each other, affirming the cultural traditions that are such an important part of the life of our nations.