



Address
by the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson
in a video recording
on the occasion of the establishment of commercial contracts
involving CCP and Chinese parties
Beijing 2006

Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to address you on this festive occasion. It marks an important new step in cooperation between China and Iceland, which acquired many new dimensions during my State Visit to China in May last year.

I remember with pleasure the great respect that the leaders of China, President Hu Jintao, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and other distinguished persons, showed towards the people of Iceland during my visit.

In our discussions we emphasized the need to utilize new technology, science, innovation and creative arts to enhance cooperation between our nations.

Wherever the Icelandic delegation went in China, we were inspired by the new spirit, by the progress we saw everywhere, by the determination to create in this new century an era of well-being and opportunities, especially for the young generation.

In my many discussions with President Hu Jintao and other leaders of China, we stressed the importance of the cultural heritage of both our nations and how culture could be a driving force of innovation in the 21st century.

Sharing thoughts through language and art is what defines us as humans. It is through these media that we discover common values and ambitions. One shared value is enjoying a good story. Storytelling is as old as humanity

and has appeared throughout the centuries in many guises, be it in songs, writings or pictures.

In the 12th century, monks in Iceland lovingly illuminated manuscripts telling heroic stories of the first Viking settlers in Iceland, and ever since, Icelanders have been especially fond of storytelling.

It is fitting that at the dawn of this new millennium, this tradition is still thriving, but, instead of monks, we have now artists and programmers to transcribe stories. They are no longer written with ink on vellum or paper, but with bits and pixels on global data networks. But the subject matter remains the same: the fascinating drama of human ambitions, moral strength and weakness played out in a brave new world.

Another feature that bonds people everywhere is the fascination for the stars in the sky. There is probably no child on our earth that has not gazed dreamingly at a starry sky and wondered about what amazements lie beyond.

It was the stars that guided the first Viking settlers, when they boldly sailed out in the open sea in the hope of discovering new lands and riches. Their quest was fruitful, discovering Iceland and even going as far as America. Their frontier was the earth and the oceans, but the stars led the way.

Today, China is reviving this ambition to reach for the stars with its recently formed Space Programme. This will give many children everywhere something to dream about in the coming decades and widen the horizon of mankind.

Iceland does not possess the physical resources to reach for the stars in this manner, but we can do it in a more modest way, through the means of interactive storytelling, which can also bring people closer to the stars; maybe not physically but at least in their minds.

There is a saying in Icelandic that in any voyage, it is the mind that carries you half the way. So this new product can be seen as our modest contribution to a fascinating journey.

When the former President of China, Jiang Zemin, came to Iceland as my guest four years ago, he was thrilled by Iceland's natural environment: the volcanoes, geysers, lava fields, rivers and waterfalls, the glaciers and magnificent scenery everywhere on display in Iceland.

Our discussions took place here, in the same hall from which I am now addressing you. We agreed that it was important that the people of China and the people of Iceland be given new opportunities to cooperate in the 21st century and that it was vital to use new technology to broaden our cooperation.

The event which we are now celebrating is a testimony to this vision. I am sure, in the light of my discussions with both President Hu Jintao and former President Jiang Zemin, that they would join me in welcoming this new field of cooperation and be as fascinated as I am by the new world of computer games which the Icelandic company CCP has created and is now bringing to our friends in China.

I wish you well and hope that millions of our Chinese friends will soon enjoy entering this world which CCP has created through computer games.