



**Ávarp
forseta Íslands
Ólafs Ragnars Grímssonar
í hádegisverði fyrir forsætisráðherra Norðurlanda
og forsætisráðherra Japan
Bessastöðum
22. júní 1999**

Mér er það einstök ánægja að fagna hér á Bessastöðum virðulegum og áhrifaríkum gestum úr frændgarði okkar og frá fjarlægri vinnuþjóð.

Þegar forsætisráðherrar Norðurlanda sitja sátir á hinu forna höfðingasetri sækir sagan sem oftast á hugann því einmitt hér á hæðinni kaus norrænn landnámsmaður um árið 900 að hefja sína búsetu og rúnum þremur öldum síðar kom Snorri Sturluson hingað til Bessastaða frá Reykholti og hélt áfram því verki að færa Íslendingum og norrænum frændum ódauðlegar bókmenntir í hetjusögum og Heimskringlu og með Eddu ljóð sem síðar urðu dýrgripir heimsins alls.

Med nordiske statsministre her på det gamle høvdingesetet, går tankene nok en gang tilbage til sagatiden. For det var nettopp her på denne høyden som en norrøn landnåmsmann rundt år 900 valgte å bosette seg. Og vel tre hundre år senere kom så Snorri Sturluson hit til Bessastaðir fra Reykholt og fortsatte arbeidet med å tilføre islendinger og nordiske frender en udødelig litteratur med heltesagaer og Heimskringla og med Eddadikt; litteratur som siden ble en skatt for hele verden.

In this historic place where the origin of our nation can be traced, where poets and scholars for centuries sought inspiration and wisdom, where the Republic found its heart, we welcome distinguished and dear friends who have assembled here to consolidate joint determination to strive together for a world dedicated to the freedom and prosperity of all.

In welcoming the Prime Minister of Japan to this Nordic table we honour not only the history of our peoples but also celebrate our common vision of the future.

Our nations – the Nordic countries and Japan; so far in distance and yet so near in aspirations – are determined to make democracy and human rights the cornerstones of global co-operation in the 21st century.

We are dedicated to bringing prosperity and equal opportunity to men and women alike and to direct trade and economic policies towards sustaining growth and progress to the benefit of all.

Together the Nordic countries and Japan have called for the strengthening of the United Nations, for reforms of the Security Council and the realisation of the fundamental role which the creators of the United Nations institutions deemed necessary in order to bring about peaceful resolution of conflicts and in order to guarantee the right of every nation to security and peace.

Our ancestors, whether in the north or in the island communities of Japan, farmers and fishermen, who for centuries challenged the oceans and cultivated the soil, learned to respect the forces of nature and value the riches of the land, of the forests and the fields, of the seas, the rivers and the lakes.

On the volcanic terrains of Iceland and Japan we humbly accept the enormity of the forces still at work in the Earth's center. We are reminded again and again that despite the collective strength of science and technology we are not yet and never will be the masters of the Universe.

We have inherited the Earth only to preserve it and to guard all its plants and living creatures so future generations will be able to enjoy the wonders of the creation in all their splendour.

The sense of community is the essence of the traditions inherited by my nation and the people of the country so distinguishably represented by our honoured guest the Prime Minister of Japan.

The spirit and the vision of the islanders are shared by the people of Iceland and Japan and so is our respect for ancient cultures glorified in heroic sagas and songs. The identity of both our nations is deeply rooted in literary heritage, old wisdoms which will guide us towards the future.

This assembly of leaders from Japan and the Nordic countries is a manifestation of how truly global mankind has become in our joint search for a better world.

At the crossroads not only of a new century but also of a new millennium the co-operation and productive agreements between the peoples of Japan and the Nordic countries are signposts for all this to follow.

With high hopes for the continuation of our friendship and co-operation I ask you to join me in raising your glasses and in saluting the inspiration and the wisdom which has brought our nations together.