



Address
by the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson
at the opening of the
Special Olympics
in North Carolina
26th June 1999

Athletes, families and friends from all continents of the world. We are gathered together here for a common cause, to honour the Special Olympics as a shining example of heroism and humanity.

In the pursuit of excellence there is no place for prejudice or hate.

Here people of different religions, cultures and life-styles meet in an atmosphere of unity, motivated by a desire for understanding.

To respect those who are different is a worthwhile goal, a necessity in a turbulent world.

As technology and science make the world smaller and smaller, we must find what it is that joins us rather than what separates us.

The Special Olympics have become an instrument for global communication. Here we speak a common language, achieve international cooperation and understanding.

The athletes of the Special Olympics are indeed role models for young people all over the world, in every country, every city, every home.

The support of families and friends creates a foundation on which dreams come true.

Volunteers and supporters find their lives enriched and ennobled.

Here the athletes meet as strangers and competitors but part as friends and compatriots.

The Special Olympics movement provides us with the opportunity to enjoy a truly global experience and meet people from all over the world.

Here the leaders of nations can learn from the spirit which binds us together, from the excellence and dedication of each and every athlete.

I salute the vision which inspired the founders of the Special Olympics and wish all of us happy days here in North Carolina. May the spirit of this unique event be with us for ever.