



**Greetings from
the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson**

The Icelandic sagas relate how young people used to pass the winter days in times of old by playing ball games on frozen lakes and wetlands. Although we do not know the exact rules, those games may have been a distant relative of the sport featured at the international tournament which is now being held here with the participation of teams from nine countries from different parts of the world.

The energetic young farmers who set off from Iceland across the ocean to settle in Canada towards the end of the 19th century took their national sports with them. In the course of time other sports captured their interest, in particular ice hockey, the national sport of Canada. The Icelandic Canadians formed several ice hockey teams in the early years of the century which has just drawn to a close, and merged to found the Falcons in 1908. This club enjoyed success locally around Winnipeg, then at national level when it won the coveted Allan Cup in 1920 and represented Canada at the Olympic Games in Antwerp the same year. There the Falcons continued to triumph and crowned their success when their team, which was almost entirely comprised of people of Icelandic descent, became Olympic champions in ice hockey.

Young Icelanders today no longer need to wait for winter in order to go skating. Two impressive skating rinks have been built in Reykjavík and Akureyri, which will help to consolidate Iceland's profile in skating sports as well as providing people of all ages with a popular place for leisure activities.

Ice hockey is therefore well placed to establish itself as a popular sport in Iceland. Although a newcomer to the International Ice Hockey Federation, the Icelandic Ice Hockey Federation is considered worthy of being trusted with hosting a major international tournament here in Reykjavík.

I would like to congratulate the Icelandic Ice Hockey Federation on this milestone and hope that the tournament will prove both successful and entertaining. I wish our visitors from other countries a warm welcome to Iceland and wish all the players the best of luck and success.