Greetings
from the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson

A thousand years ago an Icelandic woman, Gudríd Thorbjarnardóttir, sailed across the ocean and lived for some time in a continent which Icelandic discoverers called Vinland but would later be given the name America.

There she gave birth to a son, Snorri – the first child of European descent to be born in America – and enjoyed the beauty and bounties of her new home. Then Gudríd returned to Iceland, went from there on a pilgrimage to Rome, the capital city of Christianity and the Western world at that time, and ended her life in devotion to God, as an anchoress on a farm in one of Iceland's most beautiful fjords.

Gudríd Thorbjarnardóttir was without a doubt the foremost female explorer in the history of humankind, the first woman to dwell in both America and Rome, almost five hundred years before Columbus.

This Icelandic woman was not only a bold adventurer; for the first five hundred years of this millennium she was also certainly the most widely travelled woman in the world. Furthermore, Gudríd was a gifted singer, and the ancient Icelandic sagas, written down in the 13th century, describe how she sang in a dramatic ritual.

So it is highly appropriate, 1,000 years after Gudríd Thorbjarnardóttir graced America with her song, that Iceland's most celebrated female choir should now be visiting the shores where she travelled to delight people in Boston, New York and Washington with their brilliant art.

The Reykjavík Women's Choir has become one of the most impressive instrument for musical expression in Iceland, and a moving testimony to the creativity and vital energy which has typified Icelandic women for more than a thousand years.

I hope that our friends in America will enjoy these performances, and that this enchanting choir's sweet and powerful tones will prompt people to think back to the Icelandic matriarch who, at the dawn of the present millennium, made the New World the birthplace of her first-born child.

(sign.)