



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

Iceland is a showcase of natural forces. The creator is still at work here at the meeting place between Europe and America, where the primal forces of nature remind us daily of their presence. Ever since the first settlers arrived more than 1,100 years ago, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, sea ice, avalanches and the unpredictability of the elements have left their mark on life in Iceland. Natural catastrophes have often posed such a threat to Iceland's communities that they have been on the brink of disappearing.

A conference devoted to discussing disasters and emergencies is thus a particularly relevant topic to us Icelanders. It is vital for us to find out about the challenges faced by other nations, to hear about their experiences and ideas. Likewise it is important for us in Iceland to have the opportunity to pass on the lessons that centuries of living in a harsh natural environment have taught us about coexistence with nature's mighty forces.

I particularly welcome the decision by the international association of local authorities confronting disasters and emergencies to arrange, in cooperation with Icelandic organizations and agencies, a conference in Reykjavík on how to respond to natural catastrophes and provide aid to relieve such tragedies.

The people of Iceland welcome you who are engaged in such work, because we know that advances in this field can benefit everyone in times of great difficulty. I send you best wishes from everyone in Iceland and wish you every success in your noble task.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson  
(undirskrift)