



LÖGMANSSKRIVSTOVAN
Prime Minister's Office

Mr. President, Madam Eliza

Áfram Ísland!

This Icelandic slogan rang throughout the streets and homes of the Faroe Islands last summer. For several evenings, hundreds of Faroese gathered together in the centre of Tórshavn to cheer on the Icelandic “straukar”, who took the world by storm during the European Championships in France.

Here in the Faroes, we rejoiced with the brave and persevering Icelanders. We were as proud as if they were our own team. It was as if these outstanding match results strengthened our own self-image: “If the Icelanders can do it, well then someday we can do it too!”

On Faroese television a man was asked how it was possible that so many people could come together to support another country's team. His answer was short and simple. “Icelanders are our neighbours – our blood.”

And that is as true as it gets.

There is hardly a nation more closely connected to Iceland than the Faroes. Our language, culture and history are intertwined. Culturally we come from the same Norse roots. Our North Atlantic living conditions are very similar. The Faroe Islands and Iceland are brother nations. Brother nations in every sense.



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Like brothers we have the same origin. We are close-knit. We are friends. We cooperate. We support each through adversity. And we also compete with each other in several areas.

In trade and industry our paths have merged on many occasions. Within the fishing industry, there aren't many other countries the Faroes have worked as much with as Iceland. And throughout the years, Icelanders have often owned a large part of the Faroese industry. But it isn't just fish, salmon farming, commercial products, banks, exports or trawl nets that tie us together.

It is the people that tie us together.

These past years, several Faroese students have studied in Iceland, other people have gone to Iceland for health and wellness purposes, while some have felt the benefit of good working relationships in areas of culture, tourism and research.

We have also built strong ties within sports. We've seen many Icelanders in the Faroese sports world and there have also been several Faroese players trying their luck in Iceland, with good results, both in football and handball. If I remember correctly, the Faroese National goalkeeper, Gunnar Nielsen, was even the goalkeeper for your team "Stjarnan".

Many Icelanders have made the Faroe Islands their home. In fact, in the Faroes, there are only more Danes than Icelanders. Here's a fun fact; according to the latest statistics, there are 167 citizens in the Faroes with Icelandic passports.



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There is a saying: “Siblings that say they never fight are most definitely hiding something.” And as brothers and sisters and brother nations, we also disagree. Our interests are very similar and so we can easily become competitors.

These past years there have been a few matters we have disagreed upon.

But even when our disputes get loud, like most siblings we quickly get back to our friendly ways. This of course makes me happy.

Brotherhood tolerates a lot. There's room for kindness, cooperation and competition.

In fact, competition can often bring out the best in us. Economically speaking, both the Faroe Islands and Iceland are currently among the countries in Europe that are most prosperous. Both countries have recovered well from the terrible financial crisis and can today celebrate growth and progress.

Mr. President and Madam Eliza

There is great value in a faithful friendship and in good neighbours. This is something the Faroese and the Icelanders, each in their own way, have realized and felt the warmth of.

We have grieved together with you many times when the powerful force of nature took its toll. We cried with you when the volcano erupted in “Vestmannaeyjar” in 1973, and again in 1995 when the violent avalanche hit in Flateyri and Súðavík. We



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were also devastated when the financial crisis drastically hit Iceland in 2008.

Our faithful friendship as good neighbours is something the Faroese people have always valued.

Thousands of Faroese have throughout the years worked tirelessly along Iceland's coastline, thousands of others have made a living in Iceland during the fifties when our own fishing industry was in despair. When the fishing limits and boundaries expanded forty years ago, bringing necessary and drastic changes to the fishing industry in the North Atlantic, Iceland also proved to us they were our true friends and brothers.

And just a few months ago, we again felt the warmth of our close friendship. After the terrible Christmas storm in the Faroe Islands, Icelanders took the initiative to raise money for our rescue companies.

On behalf of the Faroese Government, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you once again.

Mr. President and Madam Eliza

You are the third Icelandic President to make an official visit to the Faroes. Thirty years ago Vígdis Finnbogadóttir honoured us with the first official visit.

In 1987, the entire Faroese media agreed that Vígdis Finnbogadóttir's wonderful demeanor, extensive knowledge and great interest in our culture was something that captivated the



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entire nation. It was also noted how popular she was amongst the children across the country, spending time talking to them.

And frankly, I can see several of the same characteristics in *this* Presidential visit. You are a good man, a knowledgeable man - and not least - a cultured man. Over the last few days I've noticed how fond people are of you and your friendly conduct.

During the first Presidential visit thirty years ago, Vígdis Finnbogadóttir pointed out several times how important it was for the "*age-old friendship between these two countries to become even stronger and better.*"

I can only agree with the message from Vígdis Finnbogadóttir. It is my hope that with this visit, we have done our utmost to make sure that our "*age-old friendship becomes even stronger and better.*"

Thank you!

Aksel V. Johannesen
Prime Minister.