



## Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

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### **Address by H.E. Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of Latvia, at the Accreditation Ceremony of Jn Baldvin Hannibalsson, Ambassador of Iceland Riga, March 11, 2003**

Your Excellency,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you as Icelands Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Latvia. The relations between Latvia and Iceland have always been based on shared values, mutual understanding, trust and support.

Being a small country like Latvia and having spent long years under the rule of foreign powers, Iceland provided strong moral support to the Baltic States during their Singing Revolution in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Through the consistent implementation of an unwavering foreign policy that never recognized the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States, Iceland become the first Western country to officially recognize the reestablishment of Latvias independence, on August 26, 1991. The people of Latvia remember and highly value your personal contribution to Icelands courageous diplomatic initiative.

We have every reason to be pleased with the development of relations between Latvia and Iceland during the past twelve years. We have developed an active political dialogue and enjoy multifaceted bilateral cooperation, which is being extended through our joint activities in regional and international organizations. We highly appreciate Icelands strong and consistent support of Latvias aspirations to become a full member of the NATO Alliance.

The people of Latvia and Iceland are getting to know each other better both through business and cultural activities. Culture and art are those manifestations of the human spirit that extend the strongest bridge of understanding between people of different nations.

In August 2002, I had the opportunity to make a state visit to your friendly country. This visit left a lasting impression. I shall always hold fond memories of Icelands beautiful landscape, rich historical and cultural heritage, as well as the heartfelt hospitality of the people I met. From my discussions with H. E. Mr. Ragnar? Grimson (spelling?), President of Iceland, I gained valuable insights about the prospects for strengthening the bilateral ties between our nations. These prospects include joint participation in international projects in the Baltic region and Northern Europe.

Though the scope of relations between Latvia and Iceland is already wide and covers practically all sectors, one can always find the ways for extending them and making them even closer. Our bilateral relations are currently being strengthened by mutually beneficial economic cooperation projects. The amendment of Latvian legislation in conformity with EU standards, the signing of treaties between both of our countries, and the increasing interest of Icelands investors in Latvia are the right prerequisites for boosting our economic cooperation.

Your Excellency,

I am convinced that your activities as Icelands Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Latvia will provide an important impetus to the further strengthening of relations between our two nations. I wish you luck and success in the implementation of

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your duties.