



Dear Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege for me to welcome all of you to Greenland and to host this Arctic Circle Greenland Forum together with the President of Iceland Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson.

This is the very first time the Arctic Circle is held in Greenland. We are delighted to have you here to participate and share your experience with the work you do in the Arctic.

I am happy to see distinguished delegations from other parts of the Arctic, North America, Europe and Asia. That many of you travelled long distances serves to remind us all just how important the Arctic is.

As we all know the global attention on the Arctic has grown the last couple of years. This means that leading nations worldwide are starting to develop strategies and establish partnerships regarding the Arctic.

The Arctic Circle Greenland Forum presents an opportunity for Greenland to show that the Arctic inhabitants most certainly are active players in the dialogue about our region's development.

The Arctic Circle has in just three years grown into one of the largest international conference for discussions on Arctic challenges and opportunities in connection to the development of the Arctic region.

I am excited that Greenland can be a part of the work of the Arctic Circle to strengthen the international focus on the future of the Arctic.

We will continue to play an important role in efforts to increase international awareness of - and ensure understanding of – indigenous peoples rights, particularly the right to development. Hence the title of the forum 'Economic development for the peoples of the Arctic.

Many of the indigenous peoples in the Arctic have similarities to Greenland both in regards to challenges but also opportunities. This is why it was important for us to have indigenous leaders as speakers in this Forum.

With Arctic Circle Greenland Forum we hope to show you that the peoples of the Arctic are the ones who know best what is needed to develop their own territories/lands.

My government has four business pillars as priority areas in regards to the development of our society - fishing, minerals, tourism and industry. We believe the four business pillars are of utmost importance to ensure a framework for a sustainable development.

Fishing is still our leading industries, and will remain so for many more years. But as a society, there is a need to look at how we can improve other sectors to avoid dependency on one specific sector.

There are huge potentials for tourism in Greenland but to develop a successful tourism sector, it is vital that we improve access to Greenland. My Government has therefore initiated a number of infrastructure-related initiatives including a new model for airport expansion.

These initiatives necessitate major investments the next few years but eventually it will give better and cheaper transportation options for our citizens, and it will provide better conditions for tourism development and business development in general.

Our goals for the mineral resources sector are to create growth, development and jobs, both direct and indirect revenues to the communities and our country. In order to reach our goals we need investments from the private sector and investments from outside of Greenland.

During the Forum we will touch different areas of sustainable development with a focus on strengthening the Arctic peoples, including:

-involvement of local communities and empowerment of indigenous peoples
-natural and living resources
-the future of the Arctic business and investment opportunities,
-health and well-being
-and Arctic from the outside

I for one look forward to the results of the discussion of these importance issues and I hope for a productive and successful Forum and a pleasant stay amongst us.

Once again I warmly welcome you to Greenland. It's a pleasure to see so many of you here.

Qujanaq - Thank you.