It is indeed a great pleasure to be here in Nuuk and be with you at this conference. This is the first time I participate in a conference in Greenland; it may even be the first time that a Head of State of another country has come to Greenland specifically and solely to participate in an international conference. It is an indication of how both the world and Greenland have changed in a positive way.

But also, to be very frank, I have come here primarily to listen to what you have to say. I know there are many people who believe that those who hold positions similar to mine actually never listen to anybody; we just go around making statements and speeches and never sit down and show any interest in what other people are saying. It might surprise you that a quite a number of my colleagues are pretty good listeners.

There is also an additional reason why I wanted to come here to listen, to take two days out of my programme for that purpose. The reason is that your dialogue is really at the cutting edge of academic and scientific developments on Arctic issues. If we are going to have successful policy-making in the Arctic and the North, an area that has now become one of the most important regions of the world, it must be based on active scientific and scholarly conclusions. Otherwise we are going to make enormous mistakes.

I have said, and I will say it again here today, that perhaps no other area is as dependent on active research and scholarly dialogue in the 21st century – not just in ten years' time or twenty years time, but in the immediate future – as the Arctic and the North. I have also come to support active cooperation between Iceland and Greenland, to demonstrate that we have become so close that our
dialogue has become normal and intense. The University of Akureyri and the
University in Nuuk can be leading pillars in this new construction of cooperation
and scholarly discovery.

It was mentioned here before how small the University of Akureyri was when
it began. I could also tell you that when the University of Iceland was founded
in 1911 it only had forty students; only one of them was a woman. It reflects the
state of the nation that although the vision was to establish a University, there
was no building to house it. For the following 20–25 years it had to be in the
Parliament building. This had some influence on the MPs in a positive way! In
one hundred years, the University has developed into a formidable institution,
with multi-disciplinary departments and active engagements with the global
scientific community in creating new knowledge.

So my primary purpose in being here is to listen, to support Greenland in
establishing Nuuk and other places as venues for international scholarly discus-
sion, and also to strengthen cooperation between Iceland and Greenland and
especially between Akureyri and Nuuk.

Then again, if people in my position are invited to stand up and speak, we
can’t resist the temptation to continue a little bit. So I am going to do that this
morning.

Let me first emphasize, as I have been saying now for about two or three years,
that I see the North and the Arctic as a new intellectual frontier in the sense that
there is an urgent need for scientific discoveries and scholarly dialogue. Perhaps
similar to what happened two or three hundred years ago with respect to other
parts of the world. The difference is, however, that with this new frontier we only
have a few years, at the most five or ten, to get our act together, if the policy-
making and the decision making processes, not only among the Arctic countries
but also throughout the globe, are going to be successful.

This new intellectual frontier must also be related to scholarly activity in other
parts of the world. This was demonstrated in an inspiring way in Iceland last
week when scientists and scholars who have primarily concerned themselves
with the Himalayan regions came to Iceland and met up with the Open Assem-
bly of the Northern Research Forum. It was the first time in history that scholars
and scientists who have worked on the Himalayan region, from India, China,
Pakistan, Nepal, Europe and the United States, came together with scientists and
scholars from the northern countries, from the Arctic, from Russia, the Nordic
countries, Canada and Alaska to discuss “Our Ice Dependent World”.

Now, the political establishments all over the world recognise that we all live
in a single ice dependent world. We need to deal with that challenge on the basis
of law, and of rights for people who live in the ice world; also to define what will
be the role of the countries that have boundaries in those areas and the role of
the rest of the world. These are not easy issues.