

August 14th
1998

His Excellency
Mr. Jiang Zemin,
President of the People's Republic of China,
Beijing.

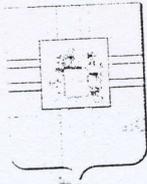
Your Excellency

I value highly the friendship and respect shown towards me and the Presidency of the Republic by inviting my Chief of Staff, Ambassador Kornelíus Sigmundsson, to visit the People's Republic of China. He brings with him my warmest personal greetings and I have entrusted him to deliver this letter of invitation to visit Iceland to Your Excellency.

My wife and I fondly remember the profoundly interesting visit we made to China two years before I became President. We admired the culture and the progress which we witnessed and enjoyed sharing in the wisdom and learning provided by many stimulating discussions with Chinese officials.

My predecessor, President Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, considered her visit to China in 1995 to be the highlight of her last years in office. In recent years both Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson and his predecessor Steingrímur Hermannsson, Foreign Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson and his predecessor Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, in addition to the President of the Icelandic Parliament and other Icelandic Ministers and Members of Parliament have together with leaders of our business and cultural communities visited your splendid country.

The relationship between Iceland and China has thus been strengthened and deepened and the cooperation between our peoples given new dimensions.



China is not only the most populous country on Earth but also provides crucial leadership for mankind in the new century.

Iceland is admittedly the home of one of the smallest nations on Earth but the Icelandic people are proud of our long democratic tradition, our role in the UN, in NATO and key European institutions as well as how we have demonstrated throughout this century how a relatively poor nation of farmers and fishermen could develop into one of the most advanced welfare societies in the world with equal education and health-care for all and one of the highest per capita income levels.

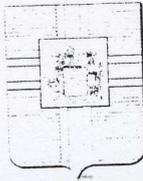
It is therefore not only in order to consolidate the cooperation and friendship between Iceland and China that I have the honour to invite Your Excellency to visit Iceland.

I also believe that your visit to Iceland could send a strong signal to the global community on how within the framework of modern international relations the largest nation on Earth and one of the smallest nations can cooperate towards a prosperous and secure future. Thus your visit could symbolize how in the new century all nations, large and small, have their role to play and can cooperate and interact in creative harmony.

About a third of the members of the United Nations are comparatively small nations. It is important to signal their importance for the evolution of the new global framework in the 21st century.

I therefore sincerely hope that Your Excellency can accept my invitation to visit Iceland and we can soon find a mutually convenient time for the visit.

It has given me great pleasure to advance Icelandic and Chinese cooperation during my Presidency and I have given priority to the growth of our relationship.

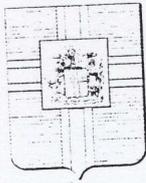


I was honoured to be the patron of the visit by an Icelandic opera group to China last year where it performed the premiere of a new Icelandic opera, the first foreign modern opera to be premiered in China. This summer an exhibition of modern Icelandic paintings, including six paintings from the Presidential Residence, was opened both in Beijing and Hong Kong. I have received delegations of Chinese officials and business leaders and was extremely pleased to have as my personal guest Ambassador Sha Zukang with whom I cooperated extensively in international forums prior to taking office as President.

The United Nations have recognized Iceland's contribution in the fields of fisheries and geothermal energy by establishing two associated institutions of the UN University in Iceland in these fields respectively. The utilization of the ocean resources together with future trade in fish products to enhance the availability of food products and the technology of how to use geothermal energy to strengthen the foundations for sustainable economic growth in the 21st century are important matters for explorations in high level Icelandic-Chinese discussions.

The evolution of change in Northern Europe and the Arctic regions, including the creation of three regional organizations – the Baltic Council, the Barents Region Council and the Arctic Council – in which Iceland together with the other Nordic states plays a pivotal role is among significant new elements in international relations, especially since these new regional organizations range from Russia through Northern Europe and the Arctic into North-America, including Canada and the United States. It is important to seek advice and views on how best to utilize these new opportunities.

The importance of new high-tech genetic medical research in Iceland as the foundation on which new drugs and new treatment procedures can be discovered and the experience of the Icelandic health-care system for the development of comprehensive and effective health-care networks and institutions in rural and urban areas are also subjects which we would like to explore with you and your officials. I recall with interest my discussions last year with representatives from the Chinese Ministry of Health who had come to Iceland for an exploratory visit.

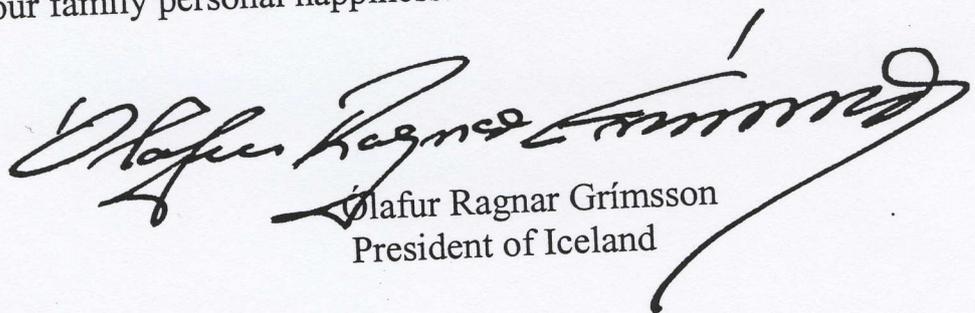


These are a few examples of important areas of mutual interest to Iceland and China and which could together with other issues be further explored in our discussions.

We are very proud of our friendship and comprehensive cooperation with China and value highly the importance China has given to the relationship with Iceland.

I believe that we can build on our harmonious relationship an ever-deepening cooperation which could benefit both our nations and also be a model and a signal for others.

I congratulate you on the outstanding success of your Presidency and wish you and your family personal happiness.


Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson
President of Iceland