



**Address by  
the President of Iceland  
Guðni Th. Jóhannesson  
at the Opening  
of the Danish Business Visit  
to Iceland**

**Gróska – A House of Ideas  
13 October 2021**

Your Royal Highness,  
Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Chairperson of Business Iceland,  
Dear guests.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome our guests from Denmark to Iceland. Last night I did so at a banquet at Bessastaðir and now we are here at Gróska, a house of ideas and innovation, a house where we think big, where we think green. Not that we don't do that as well at Bessastaðir, but here we really feel the power of a creative community, the power of people thinking about solutions for the pressing issues of our times, the power of forward thinking.

Sometimes I'm a bit stuck in the past, as I am a historian, after all. It's tempting to wonder, for instance, how the first settlers at the site of the presidential residence heated their dwellings. They must have chopped wood and they must have used peat but it was not sustainable in the sense that fairly soon the trees (or the shrubbery we call trees) were overexploited. That, at least is a plausible theory about the past.

Back then there were few other options, but today we have created, through our experience and expertise, a world of possibilities. Which road do we want to take?

Here at Gróska we will learn about green energy, green options, both in Iceland and in Denmark. In our countries, environmental activists and others with a passion for our nature and our future will emphasize that we need to do more, be faster in all our actions. Still, what we see here should fill us with drive and energy – green energy.

Furthermore, the road from here will take our distinguished guests, literally, to sites of solutions. At Reykjavík Energy and Carbfix we can demonstrate the utilization of geothermal power for heating and energy production, as well as the capture of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, certainly an innovative method in our efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

Your Royal Highness, dear listeners: The right mindset is equally important. Earlier this month, mudslides damaged land in north-east Iceland after an enormous rainfall. It made many wonder about climate change, the thawing of permafrost, its causes and consequences. At the same time, life must go on. “We have a task ahead of us,” one of the farmers said. “We must heal the wounds in the mountainside, make it green and nice again. Then we just have to remove the mud from the fields and cultivate them again.”

Talk about the right approach! As we face pressing issues of the present and the future, I believe that the best mindset is a mixture of realism and optimism, resilience and fresh thinking. I hope that we Icelanders will show our good guests from abroad our spirit of can-do. Admittedly, we sometimes attribute to ourselves another philosophy, that things will just work out somehow – in Danish *det ordner sig* or *det skal nok gå*. Such confidence in the future can serve us well, yes, but only if we apply our minds wisely to the challenges ahead of us. Things can work out well. It’s just up to us.

I look forward to this session at Gróska and offer my thanks to all those who have organized and are taking part in this promising event, from Iceland and Denmark, these two friendly states in the Nordic region.