

Address by Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland, at the opening of an event on Nordic cooperation during times of conflict.

Held in Veröld – House of Vigdís on Wednesday 19 October 2022, 2.15 pm.

Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, President of Iceland, Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland, ministers and panellists, other guests.

I am honoured and delighted to welcome you all on behalf of the University of Iceland to this discussion on Nordic collaboration during times of conflict.

We are certainly living through a period of conflict in international politics. War rages in Europe, weakening the foundations of the international community, international law and treaties, respect for the borders of sovereign states, human rights and the lives of civilians. Western democracies have responded decisively to Russia's invasion of Ukraine by uniting in support of Ukraine. EU and NATO Member States have come together to condemn Russia's actions and two Nordic nations, Finland and Sweden, have applied to join NATO. The presidents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania recently visited the University of Iceland and made it clear in their speeches that the Baltic countries see themselves as aligned with the Nordic countries and other Western democracies. But we all have a challenging winter ahead of us, which will test our solidarity, resolve and resilience.

Dear guests. Universities are institutions committed to the free pursuit of knowledge and democratic exchange of opinions. The University of

Iceland is therefore an appropriate setting for today's meeting of practitioners and academics, who have come together to discuss Nordic and international cooperation in times of conflict. I am certain that this dialogue will be enlightening and help us all to better understand the urgent challenges now facing us.