

**Address by Jón Atli Benediktsson, rector of the University of
Iceland, to open the symposium on the future and innovation in the
field of biopharmaceutical development. Held in the Aula on
Thursday 9 September 2021, 1 pm.**

Minister of Industry and Innovation, Swedish Ambassador, speakers,
distinguished guests near and far.

It is my great pleasure to say a few words to open this symposium on
the future and innovation in the field of biopharmaceutical
development, organised in collaboration between the University of
Iceland, Alvotech, the Science Park, the Aztiq investor fund and the
Swedish-Icelandic Chamber of Commerce. This event is the first of a
series of symposia that will be held here in the Aula this academic year.

The University of Iceland is a wide-ranging international research
university and innovation, in the broadest sense, is a key aspect of
everything we do. Innovation is manifested not only in dynamic
research, technological development, patent applications and start-up
companies, but also in many other ways across all schools at the
University. For example, in the development of new methods to
support teaching and learning, in books that enrich the spirit, new
drugs that alleviate suffering, and more efficient solutions for public
services.

The development of a Science Park in the heart of the University campus at Vatnsmýri, a stone's throw from our key partners at Landspítali University Hospital, represents a major step towards further strengthening innovation. The goal of the Science Park is to bring together university operations and knowledge-driven enterprises in order to systematically further the combined impact of industry and research institutes, thereby laying the foundations for new export and employment opportunities in Iceland. The Science Park is already home to successful businesses such as the biotechnology companies deCODE genetics and Alvotech and the video games developer CCP. The latest offshoot of the Science Park is the Gróska Business Growth Centre, which houses a huge range of innovative enterprises, strong support units for entrepreneurs, and start-ups in the fields of finance, travel, architecture and design.

DeCODE genetics, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, is a world leading company in its field. DeCODE focuses on identifying the causes of many of the most serious diseases that afflict humanity, such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes. DeCODE genetics and the University of Iceland have a long and fruitful partnership in research and teaching, sharing staff and research students. Efforts are being made to further strengthen this collaboration.

The partnership between the University of Iceland and Alvotech was established in 2018, with the aim of promoting innovation in the field of biotechnology and supporting basic research with an emphasis on educating more research scientists in Iceland. Since then, we have developed interdisciplinary collaboration in teaching and learning, research and innovation along with Alvotech providing student with internship opportunities. A very important example of this collaboration is a masters programme in industrial biotechnology, from which the first students graduated this spring.

The partnerships with deCODE and Alvotech provide examples of the opportunities that lie in collaboration between higher education and industry in biotechnology. By working together on research and innovation, we can further strengthen the Icelandic economy, creating exciting opportunities for young people which bring both economic and social benefits to Iceland.

The University of Iceland Science Park is a long way from completion and many more exciting opportunities lie ahead. Work is also underway on developing a framework plan for the entire University campus, entitled "A Green Edge Campus". A key starting point for the new plan is the nature reserve in Vatnsmýri that makes the University of Iceland campus so unique. It is also evident that the campus will have a big part to play in the new planned Borgarlína Bus Rapid Transit System. The University campus will therefore not only be an attractive place to work and study for our staff and students, but also for a diverse group of businesses whose operations depend on university graduates and innovative thinking.

The University of Iceland's latest contribution to promoting innovation is our new comprehensive strategy for the period 2021-2026, which took effect this summer. It is safe to say that research, innovation and fruitful dialogue with industry and the wider community are central to our new strategy. And that is also the main theme of this new series of symposia organised by the University and Alvotech. I look forward to engaging in further discussions about how we at the University of Iceland can work with the government and Icelandic industry to ensure the brightest possible future for Icelandic society.

Dear guests. I will not keep you any longer, since we have an exciting agenda ahead of us today.

Thank you.