

**Address by Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland, at
Interdisciplinary Meeting, 25 November 2020**

Director of the National Museum of Iceland, Margrét Hallgrímsdóttir,
speakers, ladies and gentlemen. Good morning, everyone!

It is my honour and pleasure to address this symposium, jointly hosted by
the National Museum of Iceland and the University of Iceland.

The National Museum is the University of Iceland's closest neighbour on
our campus in West Reykjavík and both institutions have benefited from
fertile collaboration over the years. Indeed, the work of both institutions
is closely related and interconnected in many ways. In the address I gave
almost exactly a year ago at the inauguration ceremony for the National
Museum's splendid new storage and research centre at Tjarnarvellir in
Hafnarfjörður, Iceland, I said that the common purpose of universities and
museums was to gather, preserve and share knowledge. It should be
noted here that the National Museum of Iceland has, since 2013, been
defined as a university institute.

Collaboration between the University of Iceland and the National Museum
is more precisely defined in a formal partnership agreement which aims to
systematically capitalise on the countless opportunities for collaboration
in research and learning. To elaborate, the partnership is aimed at using
the specialist knowledge and facilities of both institutions to strengthen
research and education in the fields we have in common, for example
archaeology, history, museum studies, folkloristics, cultural sharing and

Icelandic. Particular emphasis is placed on robust collaboration in the area of student internships and courses in common fields. The partnership agreement also allows for experts at the National Museum who meet academic requirements to supervise University of Iceland students writing their final theses, and students can be granted temporary access to facilities at the museum. Furthermore, the agreement allows the jobs of tenured teaching staff at the University of Iceland to be linked to museum operations and I can mention that a University of Iceland professor of archaeology has been a joint employee of both institutions. Last but not least, the institutions work together on conferences, publications, exhibitions and symposia to promote social progress and engagement with the public. This symposium is a good example of the fruits of this partnership, this being the second time that the two institutions team up to organise such an event.

The symposium today is entitled Interdisciplinary Meeting: Museums and Climate Change, or Fræðamót in Icelandic, and it will address the impact of climate change on museum work and the challenges and opportunities facing museums in our time. It goes without saying that the climate change we are now seeing affects not only individual disciplines or individual institutions; rather, it is a genuine threat to the future of life on Earth. For this reason, we must all make it our business and join the fight against the imminent climate crisis, each in our own way and to the best of our ability. The University of Iceland has, in recent years, placed increased emphasis in research and education on the challenges of our time and we have looked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals to

guide us in this context. Just recently, over the last semesters, we organised an ambitious interdisciplinary lecture series entitled "The University and the UN Sustainable Development Goals", which drew large audiences. The University of Iceland is also currently drafting a new strategy for the next few years and climate issues and the resulting social challenges will doubtless be key issues. Museums are also truly vital in this context; climate change affects their work in many ways, bringing both challenges and opportunities. There is no doubt that museums have a significant role to play by responsibly meeting our society's demands for increased sustainability and by actively engaging in informed discourse on climate change and its consequences.

Ladies and gentlemen. I will not keep you any longer, since we have an exciting agenda ahead of us today. Before I finish, I would like to thank the National Museum of Iceland for a wonderful partnership and I congratulate them on the honour of having been awarded the 2020 Icelandic Museum Prize for the new storage and research centre I mentioned earlier. This centre marks the turn of a new page in Icelandic museum work, providing a place where the treasures of the National Museum are in safe hands and offering first-rate facilities for teaching, research and storage of primary sources – thereby safeguarding education for the experts of the future.

Dear Guests, I declare the Interdisciplinary Meeting: Museums and Climate Change open. Congratulations, everybody.

Thank you.