

**Ávarp Jóns Atla Benediktssonar, rektors Háskóla Íslands, við veitingu
Vigdísarverðlaunanna 2024. Haldið í Veröld – húsi Vigdísar þriðjudaginn 22.
október kl. 15**

Sigrún Brynja Einarsdóttir, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs, Bryony Mathew, British Ambassador to Iceland, Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, Dean of the School of Humanities, University of Iceland, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the University of Iceland, it is an honor to welcome you to this most significant event. The Vigdís Prize is awarded by the Icelandic government, the University of Iceland, and the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding, in honor of Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, President of Iceland 1980–1996, and current UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Languages.

The Prize was established in 2020 on the 90th birthday of Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. Throughout her career, Vigdís has demonstrated visionary leadership in strengthening small language communities and promoting multiculturalism and linguistic diversity. The University of Iceland has been greatly enriched by her vision and enduring support.

In 2001, when the university celebrated its 90th anniversary, the Institute of Foreign Languages was named after Vigdís, and on April 20, 2017, along with the Faculty of Languages and Cultures, the Institute moved into this building. It also houses the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding. Inaugurated on April 2017, the Centre operates under the auspices of UNESCO. Through its participation in UNESCO programs and initiatives, the Centre leads high-impact research in various fields of cultural and linguistic diversity and multilingualism, including research projects on the Romani literary heritage, and minority and indigenous languages in the Arctic and the West Nordic regions.

The International Vigdís Prize is an award conferred for outstanding contributions to world languages and cultures. The prize is awarded to individuals, organizations or institutions to spotlight exceptional achievements in the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, multilingualism, and translation. Previous awardees are the Faroese linguist, teacher and publisher Jonhard Mikkelsen, the Greenlandic linguist and writer Katti Frederiksen, Jürgen Boos, the President and CEO of the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany, and the poet, classisist, essayist and translator Anne Carson who is with us here today.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Sigrún Brynja Einarsdóttir, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs who will now join me in presenting the award followed by a lecture by the 2024 Laureate of the Vigdís Prize.

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the University of Iceland, I would like to thank Asifa Madji, the 2024 Laureate of the International Vigdís Prize for the wonderful lecture, Sigrún Brynja Einarsdóttir, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs for presenting the award, the Board members of the Vigdís International Prize for their task, and you, the audience, for attending the event.

In closing, you are invited to a reception in Loftskjóstöðin, The Telegraph Station. It houses the exhibiton *Lend me wings. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir – life and impact*, which sheds light on Vigdís's influence both in Iceland and on the international stage, including the issues she has championed, both as President of Iceland and later as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador.