

Short address by H.E. Einar K. Guðfinnsson, Speaker of Althingi – the Parliament of Iceland, on the occasion of 25 years of regained independence of the Republic of Latvia

Your Excellency President of Latvia, honourable Speaker, Excellencies, Members of Parliament, distinguished guests!

I welcome the opportunity to attend the events today in your wonderful capital Riga, commemorating this important milestone in the history of the Republic of Latvia and I would like to express my gratitude for the invitation.

The Baltic Way along with events in Hungary and Berlin in the summer and autumn of 1989, and later the struggle for regained independence of the Baltic States and other countries under the sphere of Soviet influence, shaped our continent – and in fact the world as we know it today.

I followed closely the events that took place 25 years ago proud of my country's contribution to replacing Latvia to its rightful place; a sovereign and democratic state in the family of nations. It was not an obvious action for a small county like Iceland to take the lead in world affairs and be the first to recognize your rightful status. The government of Prime Minister David Oddsson with Foreign Minister Jon Baldvin Hannibalsson did not let smallness be a barrier to taking a moral lead. That, I believe, is a valuable lesson for all small countries.

A lesson can also be learned from the achievements you have made since regaining independence 25 years ago. Latvia, as well as your Baltic neighbours Estonia and Lithuania, has progressed immensely in the quarter of a century that has passed since the historical events of 1990. With firm basis in your history and culture, and with the will and steadfastness of your people, you serve as an example in economic and social progress. Today Latvia, and its neighbours, our friends, is firmly an integrated part of the Nordic and Baltic family. You are also full members the Euro-Atlantic Alliance, NATO, EU and the Eurozone, along with other major international organizations. With hard work and endurance you serve as an example on economic recovery after the crisis.

Excellencies, distinguished guests!

Allow me to reiterate my gratitude for the invitation and on behalf of Althingi, the Parliament of Iceland, I convey the most sincere congratulations to the people of Latvia on this important occasion. And compliment you on your achievements!