

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON THE ACCESSION OF ICELAND  
TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**First Meeting of the Conference at Deputies level  
Brussels, 19 October 2011**

**Statement by Ambassador Stefán Haukur Jóhannesson,  
Chief Negotiator for EU Accession and  
Chairman of the Negotiating Committee of the Government of Iceland**

**1. Introductory remarks**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Member States Representatives, and  
the European Commission.

I am pleased to be here today at the first meeting at Deputies level of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Accession of Iceland to the European Union. I would like to thank the Polish Presidency for organizing today's meeting, which sends an important signal that accession negotiations with Iceland are proceeding well and continue to gain in substance. Our appreciation also goes to the EU Member States and the Commission for the efficient preparation of the opening of the two Chapters on the agenda for today.

Almost four months have passed since the last Accession Conference on Ministerial level took place. During that time, several things of importance have happened in Iceland with relevance to the Accession negotiations:

- We continue to make steady progress in the negotiations as the screening reports are adopted by the Council and Negotiating positions submitted by Iceland. There is a considerable number of chapters to come in December.

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- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed and approved on the 26 August 2011 the sixth and final review of Iceland's Economic Recovery Programme, supported by a Stand-By Arrangement, making the country the first to complete such a program following the international financial crisis of October 2008. Still there are things we need to address, for example capital controls. On that issue we are closely cooperating with the Commission.
- Due to our EEA/Schengen participation we continue our high degree of alignment at full speed, as confirmed by the recent Progress Report.
- We continue to prepare the strategies required under **chapters 11** on Agriculture and rural development, and **22** on Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments.

Recently published are the Commission's Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012 and the accompanying Iceland 2011 Progress Report. Iceland is satisfied with the report, which confirms Iceland's already highly integrated structures with the European Union through its long established democracy, its membership of the European Economic Area and the Schengen zone.

The Progress Report for Iceland particularly mentions that there are different opinions on EU Accession in Iceland. However, there are clear indications that there is solid support for the process. As my Minister has stated on several occasions, much will depend on the Accession Treaty itself and developments in Europe. But you can rest assured that the Icelandic government remains committed to the process.

Today, we are opening two more chapters in the Accession negotiations; Chapter 2 on the freedom of movement for workers, and Chapter 7 on Intellectual property law. These chapters are the fifth and sixth to be opened since the beginning of the accession negotiations, of which two have already been provisionally closed. This, in my opinion, constitutes a solid result and a good basis for our future work.

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## **2. Negotiations on the following chapters:**

**- Freedom of movement for workers (Chapter 2)**

**- Intellectual property law (Chapter 7)**

Allow me now briefly to outline Iceland's position in these chapters. You have received our negotiating positions.

Iceland is closely integrated in these two chapters and has implemented the relevant *acquis* for more than 17 years, as they are fully covered by the EEA Agreement. The institutional and legislative framework is already in place to implement our obligations. Iceland will continue to monitor further developments of the *acquis* in the field and will implement any outstanding legislation by the date of accession. Iceland accepts the *acquis* in these chapters, does not request any derogation or transitional periods, and will continue to implement it.

A few words on each chapter:

Icelanders have, over the years, greatly benefited from **Chapter 2 on the freedom of movement for workers**. This is a policy area that touches our citizens directly; it gives people, especially our young people, the freedom to pursue their aspirations throughout Europe. Over the past 17 years, European workers have also been able to enjoy the same rights and privileges in Iceland as our workers enjoy in Europe. The policy ensures that worker's rights in the labour market, including the right to health care, unemployment insurance and social security, are protected regardless of where they happen to work. These same rights are also afforded to their families.

**Chapter 7 on Intellectual Property Law** has greatly benefited our companies and the environment they work in with the harmonization of rules in this area being an important feature of the principle of free movement of goods. The implementation of the two EU Regulations on Community Trademark System and Community Design will make Iceland part of the system for the protection and registration of trademarks and design within the EU. At present Iceland is largely in line with the EU *acquis* in this area. As regards the two

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outstanding issues, Iceland foresees no difficulty in being in line with the EU *acquis*, its implementation and enforcement by accession. Furthermore, we will provide regular information regarding the progress on transposing the outstanding issues.

As no further negotiations are needed for these two chapters, I am happy to agree to them being provisionally closed. This is an affirmation of the high level of alignment already achieved in the field of free movement for workers and intellectual property law.

### **3. Concluding remarks**

Mr. Chairman,

We have made excellent progress. There are, however, challenges ahead with complicated issues to be discussed and resolved. And it is important to maintain the momentum.

My Minister has stated that he wishes to open all the 33 negotiating chapters before the end of the Danish Presidency by 1 July 2012. Accordingly, the Icelandic side hopes to open a considerable number of chapters at the Intergovernmental Conference at ministerial level in December 2011 and the remaining chapters under the Danish Presidency in the first half of 2012. And in addition to that, we will continue to prepare our strategies as requested under Chapters 11 and 22. My Minister, myself and the whole Icelandic team are determined to do our utmost to deliver from our side. And I can only reiterate my Minister's wish for the early opening of the chapters where challenging negotiations are awaiting, in order to have the time needed to work out mutually agreeable solutions.

Let me express my gratitude to the Polish Presidency and the other EU Member States as well as to the Commission services for their hard work and continuous assistance. I have no doubts that jointly we will be able to attain maximum results within the Accession Conference by the end of this year, thus creating a sound basis for the further continuation of our work during the Danish Presidency the former half of 2012, and Cyprus in the latter part.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.