



**Address by  
President of Iceland  
Halla Tómasdóttir  
at the opening of  
Alþingi  
9 September 2025**

Members of Alþingi!

I wish you a warm welcome to parliament.

Respect and trust are on my mind now, at the beginning of the 157th legislative session of Iceland's parliament – and responsibility, our shared responsibility for both.

When I refer to the words respect, trust and responsibility, what I have in mind is the extreme and often hateful language which we are increasingly witnessing, not least on social media. Words have a powerful impact – they can cause harm, but they can also educate and encourage. And everything begins, as always, with words. Those who are zealous of their honour, consider their words with care and choose them wisely, conscious of the words of poet Einar Benediktsson that “in the presence of human souls, let us tread softly.” Together, those individuals who set themselves a high standard in communications, and display respect for themselves and others, create trustworthy homes, workplaces and communities.

Alþingi is one of Iceland's most important workplaces – in fact the only one which is to a large degree broadcasted live. Words spoken from the podium at Alþingi can reach the rest of the nation almost instantaneously and set an

example – establishing norms for what is permissible, and what is not. The parliamentary chamber is indeed – and *should* be – a forum for diverse opinions, a meeting-place where conflict is sometimes inevitable. It is, however, more important than ever that we choose our words carefully when we find ourselves at odds with others.

Trust is the foundational pillar of a healthy democracy, and of the social contract itself. Loss of trust must be taken seriously. We see the fateful consequences of dwindling trust in institutions and democratic traditions in societies around us. We have also become aware of lack of respect for laws, rules and customs which form the basis of international collaboration and institutions – among them those which are intended to safeguard moral principles and peace globally.

Around the world, conflicts and wars are now raging, with horrifying and tragic consequences. No one who witnesses such horror can abdicate responsibility. Perhaps the greatest challenge of our time is to find peaceful solutions to these conflicts. Democracy is also under attack, even in countries which have long been its defenders. Mental wellbeing is declining, loneliness is increasing, as is violence, and we experience growing difficulty in focusing our attention and energy on the complex tasks that we have to deal with. Effective solutions, whether at home or internationally, demand mutual trust, respect for diverse viewpoints, and understanding of the fact that we may frequently see challenges and solutions in different ways. That is natural and healthy, and above all human. But our response to conflicting opinions must also be natural, healthy, and human.

The AI revolution, which some believe may help us to take on some of the world's biggest challenges and resolve the most complex problems, appears at present to be exacerbating our difficulties, if anything, and even increasing malaise. Deepfakes have become so convincing that it seems timely to consider sensible limits to them, before it is too late. Frequent reports of chatbots' and AI

assistants' "hallucinations," and their cavalier handling of facts raise concerns. Some say that it is best to believe, and trust, nothing and nobody. I disagree. That cannot be the right answer. But how are we to continue to discuss, and resolve, large and complicated issues in such an environment? How can we ensure that the public trusts the institutions of society, politicians' statements, the content of media, the results of elections? How can we discriminate between fake news and truth?

I have here only alluded to the urgent questions that are at stake in this context. In truth, there are many more issues, and they will only grow and become more complex. The fourth industrial revolution will inevitably have a deep impact on our future. It demands increasing attention, debate and well-considered decisions. These sweeping changes require the immediate attention of all government ministries, the parliament, and the people of Iceland.

Members of Alþingi:

I know that you all stood for office at the last election to serve the public as best you could, including those who are young, or even unborn. I am convinced that you are here because you want to work together to develop and improve the conditions that will best ensure a bright future for our small and precious society. You know, better than I do, that many urgent matters demand the attention of Alþingi – matters on which you are largely in agreement, across party lines. I trust that you will work on these matters, and others, guided by self-respect and by respect for the people of Iceland. In those cases where the greatest disagreement exists, and where matters are most complex, I hope that you will be able to establish for the parliamentary process a reasonable framework which will both ensure freedom of speech and honour democratic principles. Perhaps it is time to consider revision of rules of parliamentary procedure, or even of the constitution. Alþingi can hardly be interested in setting

new records for filibustering. Concurrently, Alþingi is required to be a forum of healthy and critical debate.

Discord is perhaps one of our most notable hindrances; it sometimes prevents individuals, who generally share the same basic principles, from engaging in healthy dialogue and productive collaboration in the interest of the nation. The responsibility for achieving such dialogue and collaboration rests upon all of us: democratically elected representatives, not least here in the parliament.

Insofar as we nurture the dignity of Alþingi and trust in parliamentary government, we will also strengthen trust within society. It is my firm belief that the Icelandic nation, which has been blessed with boundless cultural and natural resources, and possesses a praiseworthy creativity, has a bright future ahead, as long as trust prevails, and we reason and work together with respect and responsibility.

I wish you success during the coming parliamentary session, and I wish all Icelanders prosperity.