

Setningarraða Jóhönnu Sigurðardóttur, forsætisráðherra, á viðskiptaþingi í Peking

16. apríl 2013

Honorable Ministers, distinguished guests

It is an honor for me to be here in Beijing and I am very pleased to see that there is such a large number of participants here for the business seminar. We are grateful for the excellent cooperation with CCPIT, the Icelandic-Chinese Trade Council and Promote Iceland, that have prepared this business seminar with our Embassy here in Beijing.

Yesterday, I was received for an official visit here in Beijing by the Premier, Li Keqiang. Following our meeting, our respective Ministers in charge of Foreign Trade signed a free trade agreement between our countries.

This is a very important agreement, which marks a new era in trade and relations between our countries. This is in fact, a landmark agreement. It is a very important agreement for Iceland, an extensive free trade agreement with one of the largest economies in the world. This is also one of few agreements that Iceland negotiates outside of the EFTA co-operation.

The agreement is also important for China, being the first free trade agreement with a European country. With the world economy changing and developing fast, new opportunities and increased possibilities are created with such agreements.

The co-operation between China and Iceland is important for both of our countries, but we should also note, that it is important in a global context. We have seen increased interest for free trade negotiations all over the world, and we now see large economic powers beginning to be more positive towards such agreements.

Iceland is a very small country, with a very small population. We are a young democracy and our history as a nation only extends to the last 1140 years. But we have managed to participate in the global economy and export, with our resources, our well educated experts, and innovative companies that extend their business, knowledge and operations to new countries and new markets.

The fact that the small Iceland, and the large China, can agree on mutually beneficial trade relations, shows us that the opportunities for opening up trade relations between different partners, are without limits.

Iceland and China have enjoyed very good cooperation, not only in traditional trade relations selling goods and services, but also utilising Icelandic know-how, to further increase use of geothermal energy in China.

This cooperation provides not only mutual benefit and business opportunities, but also contributes to the policy of using sustainable resources for energy consumption, for househeating and making of electricity.

This is just one example of a cooperation, where it is possible to increase value, by bringing together experience and research, resources and sustainable utilisation.

Export from Iceland to China, has not doubled or tripled since the beginning of this millenium. No. It has actually multiplied by seven. Export from China to Iceland, has increased even more, in the same period.

Today, Icelandic companies do business in China with fish products, high-tech solutions, computer games and provide services in geothermal utilisation, shipping, technical solutions and other similar services. Some of our companies have established themselves in China to facilitate further business.

At the same time, Chines companies do business in the field of telecommunications, heavy industry, tourism and financial cooperation in Iceland, thereby encouraging more growth in the Icelandic economy.

Dear Guests

My visit to Beijing this time, is the last official visit as Prime Minister, after a 35 year carriere in politics in Iceland. I am pleased that this last visit, is also the opening of a new future, with the political support and interest of new Chinese leaders that have now begun their new term in office.

With this free trade agreement, eliminating the majority of tariffs and custom duties, and facilitating services, investment and mutual cooperation, Iceland and China take an important step to open new and increased opportunities.

It is for you – the business community, exporters, importers, producers and service providers – to seize this opportunity and make the most of it.