

## **Celebration-speech by Premier Kuupik Kleist on inauguration of Greenland Selfgovernment 21st of June 2009**

Her Majesty Queen Margrethe, His Royal Highness Prince Henrik, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Frederik and Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary.

My dear fellow citizens and our honoured guests from abroad – President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grimsson, representatives of the Kingdom of Denmark, Ambassadors and representatives from other peoples and our Inuit relatives from the other side of the sea, who have come to take part in our celebrations.

I am very happy that you are taking part in the celebration of this auspicious day and to be able to share our joy with you. Thank you.

We are proud of what we have achieved today, for the democratic development in our country does not have a very long history.

Our forefathers had a completely different way of life than we enjoy today and democratic development in Greenland did not really start until the establishment of Boards of Guardians/Districts (*Forstanderskaber*) in South and North Greenland in 1863. Democratic development in Greenland has therefore only been a reality for the past 150 years.

However, our society has developed rapidly and we can be proud that our achievements up to the present day have been made in cooperation with other countries.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted in the autumn of 2007. Greenland took an active part in that process leading up to this important achievement, not just to protect our own rights, but also to support other indigenous peoples in the world.

As part of the global community, Greenland has paved the way to renewal, but with Self Governance we have gone a step further – now we have been recognised as a people. Greenland has now positioned herself as a leading country and an example to indigenous peoples everywhere.

But, you may well ask, how will we use this recognition in the future?

Recognition as a people has strengthened our rights and a legal foundation has been cemented which we can work to have officially recognised by the United Nations.

With official UN recognition, Denmark will once again be at the forefront of the global community as a guarantor for protection of human rights and peoples' right to self-determination.

I would therefore like to thank the Danish government for what we - in partnership - have achieved today.

Thank you for working with us as equal partners. We have seen trials and tribulations on the way to our goal, but in the end we have found solid common ground.

Greenland now has an entirely new status in the Kingdom of Denmark. Greenland also has a new Government and Denmark has a new Prime Minister. I look forward to work with you and with mutual respect for one another I hope that in the future we can achieve even more for the benefit of Greenland and Denmark.

We are very aware that Self Governance brings with it obligations for Greenland. But we are now ready to take on this greater responsibility, because we would like to achieve greater self-determination. We will do this by being open to the rest of the world.

We cannot deny the fact that we are part of the global community. Greenland must be an open society which receives guests with warmth and confidence.

We have to find our new position on the world stage, but not at the cost of our Greenlandic identity.

We will uphold our identity, for diversity is a great asset which we from Greenland can contribute to the world community.

We live in a country of spectacular beauty. Here there is still infinite peace and quiet. Here there is still an incomparable freshness in the air. Here there are still vast prospects and the wonderful play of light is part of it all, in an immense and captivating landscape.

We live in a country with an important geographical location.

With this new step we have taken, we will keep a watchful eye open for new opportunities in the future and these we will make the best use of.

The introduction of Self Governance today means we have achieved another important goal: the exclusive right to exploit the mineral resources of Greenland. This was not possible when the Home Rule was set up in 1979, but now things have fallen into place.

Thirty years have now past and the time is mature for the Kingdom of Denmark to take steps towards Greenland taking over this responsibility.

We are very happy about this, for if Greenland is to strengthen its self-determination, we must also have full responsibility for revenue-generating areas.

The current Commission has achieved great results through the Self Governance Act. Comprehensive and thorough work has now been completed and throughout the process Greenland's representatives have been dedicated and with a common understanding of each other. But we must remember that prior to the last Commission's final results, a Self Governance Commission, composed entirely of Greenlandic members, worked tirelessly for four years on a commission report which formed the foundation of the results we see today.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to every one of you who has worked in the two Commissions, both politicians and officials. You have worked diligently and loyally during the process and I congratulate you on the successful result.

But my greatest thanks goes to my fellow citizens. No matter who you are, through your contribution to social development, you have made Self Governance possible. With our individual efforts, each and every one of us has contributed to our community.

In this spirit of mutual respect, of unity and equality, we will move onwards as a people. Our right to self-determination as a people has today been sealed through the introduction of the Self Government Act – congratulations to all.

The longest day of the year is now drawing to a close, but the life-giving light will always return. Thank you.