



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks by President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
after his meeting with Prime Minister of Iceland
Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson**

Let me welcome Prime Minister Gunnlaugsson to Brussels. I would also like to congratulate him on his appointment. We had a good meeting where we particularly discussed the intentions of the new Government of Iceland regarding the relationship between the European Union and Iceland. In this context, I am pleased that the Prime Minister's first visit abroad goes to Brussels. This displays the importance of the relationship between the Union and Iceland.

The Prime Minister informed me about the political discussions in his country as regards the accession process. I understand that the Icelandic Government is preparing an assessment of the status of the accession negotiations and developments within the Union which will be presented to the Icelandic Parliament this autumn.

I have stressed that we respect the new approach to the accession process by the Icelandic Government and the will of the Icelandic people. At the same time I recalled that we remain fully committed to continuing and completing the accession process. I believe that it is in our common interest to avoid a long period of uncertainty.

We also discussed Arctic cooperation. In our informal European Union–Iceland Arctic dialogue we can strengthen our cooperation on for instance maritime safety, environmental protection, research and energy. I also thanked the Prime Minister for supporting the European Union's application for an observer status in the Arctic Council. We also discussed the possibilities for reinforcing energy cooperation.

P R E S S

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Irrespective of the accession issue, the European Union remains ready to strengthen and build on our privileged partnership, based primarily on the European Economic Area Agreement. This agreement and the EFTA membership are proof of our long standing relationship. Our aim is to continue working for a strong relationship between the European Union and Iceland, either within or outside the accession process.
