**Speech delivered by HE Poul Michelsen, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the Government of the Faroes, at the 100 years anniversary of the Faroese flag in Copenhagen (on board visiting scooner Westward Ho) on Friday 31st of May 2019**

Dear Excellencies and distinguished guests,

A warm welcome to you all, who found your way on board this beautiful old ship, Westward Ho, to join us in our celebration of the 100 years anniversary of the Faroese flag.

Ships like these played a vital role in the development of the Faroese economy towards the end of the 19th century.

With this kind of ships – a slupp in Faroese, in English a smack – the Faroe Islands were able to fish on a much larger scale far away from our own shores.

With these smacks Faroese fishermen were crossing the ocean in their pursuit for valuable catches, bringing them home for the women to process, adding value to the catches before selling them on distant markets in foreign lands.

This activity laid the foundations for the modern Faroese society, and created wealth, progress and optimism.

The increased inter-action with the outside world did not only strengthen the Faroese society and people in economic terms – it also strengthened our sense of identity. The ambition to build a proper modern nation was born.

As the Faroese nation building process went on to develop, a handful of young Faroese students here in Copenhagen decided it was high time that the Faroes had their own flag as a symbol for the nation.

This happened in the students’ hostel Regensen in central Copenhagen. The year was 1919, and here the young Faroese student Jens Olivar Lisberg designed the Faroese flag. The other Nordic cross-flags served as models for this new variety, the flag marking the existence of yet another Nordic nation – the Faroes.

This flag symbolises our historic cultural awakening and ongoing nation-building project.

Now that we celebrate the flag’s 100 years anniversary, it invites us once again to review our progress and set out new objectives.

A flag is a symbol for the people to gather around, showing eachother solidarity and giving each and everybody a sense of belonging.

We may be different as individuals, and we may disagree on many things. This is natural and healthy in any society. But at the core we know that we belong to the same land, the same people. The flag is an important symbol and reminds us about this important fact.

A flag is also about external recognition. Showing that we are a people among others.

In the world-garden of nations there are many kind of plants – trees, bushes, herbs, grasses and flowers. Some are tall, some are very bright in colours, and some are smaller and more modest in size, but the garden is rich, because it contains this broad and exciting variety. All these different individual plants that interact in a beautiful eco-system.

It took some time and a lot of discussions and disagreement, before the Faroese flag in 1940 first was recognised. It came about in the start of the strategic, but peaceful British military occupation of the Faroes as a response to the sudden, aggressive Nazi invasion of Denmark.

With the Faroes and Denmark occupied by opposing sides, a new flag was needed to identify and protect Faroese fishing vessels caught up in total war, and their cargo which was so important to the war effort.

After the war, when Denmark was liberated, and ties with the Faroes were reconnected, also the Danish government recognised the Faroese flag, and it is now the undisputed symbol of the Faroese nation, both at home and abroad.

- - -

Ladies and gentlemen,

The flag that we celebrate today is the symbol of a peace-loving people, humble and yet self-reliant and resilient.

Domestically, we are building a society of inclusivity and unity, of equal rights and opportunities.

We are building a vibrant and sustainable economy. We are also determined to open our economy to innovation, creative industries, tourism and gastronomy – the latter of which has already resulted in increased numbers of visitors to our islands and a for the first time obtaining two Michelin stars to a Faroese restaurant.

Add to this, we are also constantly improving the infrastructure to make our island economy competitive.

The domestic energy consumption is increasingly supplied by sustainable, green energy. The aim is that by the year 2030 the domestic energy consumption will be 100% renewable.

The Faroes are an eager trading partner – ready to expand trade cooperation with still more countries.

It is our policy to diversify trade relations with new partners all over the world.

We see great value in more contacts and cooperation with peoples all around the globe. Not only regarding trade – also regarding culture, sports, and standing together with you all in meeting the challenges that we all share, pulling together to find effective ways to tackle pollution and climate change.

Indeed, our flag reflects the ambition of a nation to work together in partnership with our Nordic and European neighbours and with the wider world.

On that note, I would like to conclude by thanking you for your time and consideration - and I hope we will continue to have an enjoyable time on board this good ship.

Thank you!