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Background Notes:

The position of Iceland with respect to the Baltic States.

Iceland recognized the independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1922. It has never recognized the annexation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union.

The Icelandic Government decided on 23 January 1991 to initiate talks with the Government of Lithuania concerning the possibility of strengthening their diplomatic relations. This decision was supported by the Althing in a resolution adopted on 11 February 1991. The resolution confirms that the recognition by the Government of Iceland in 1922 of the independence of the Republic of Lithuania is fully valid. It furthermore called upon the Government to formally establish diplomatic relations with Lithuania as soon as possible.

Following the declaration of the Supreme Councils of Estonia and Latvia on the re-establishment of statehood the Government of Iceland on 22 August 1991 confirmed its recognition of the two States and announced its readiness to establish formal diplomatic relations. In a letter to President Vytautas Landsbergis of Lithuania of 22 August 1991 the Government of Iceland invited the Foreign Minister of Lithuania to join the Foreign Ministers of Estonia and Latvia at a meeting in Reykjavik for the purpose of signing formal declarations on the establishment of diplomatic relations.

The Government of Iceland has since 1989 raised the question of the Baltic States in international fora. Since the independence movements in the Baltic States gained momentum in the spring of 1990 Iceland has actively supported their quest for international recognition. The Government of Iceland has thus raised the matter at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and within NATO, as well as in bilateral contacts with many

European countries.

The Government of Iceland has carefully studied the validity, under international law, of its position on the international status of the Baltic States. In this connection regard must be had to Iceland's recognition of these States in 1922, the establishment of legitimate constitutional authorities in the Baltic States and the clear demonstration of the will of the Baltic people. That these States continue to be restrained in their independence at the present time is a fact which cannot be denied, but this situation can be changed through negotiations with the relevant Soviet authorities. However, the circumstances which have led to that restriction dictate that they cannot be determinative of its international status.

The question has been raised whether the actions contemplated by the Government of Iceland can be seen as interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. Iceland holds the view that it cannot be debarred from treating the Baltic States as subjects of international law. Original recognition of the Baltic States is regarded as still valid; the premises under which they were incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940 cannot be accepted as altering that fact.

Iceland remains willing to exercise its good offices to work towards friendly and constructive relations between all parties concerned taking into account the recent developments and on the basis of the changed circumstances.

The Baltic States' quest for independence

Iceland's policy and actions

1. Iceland recognized the independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1922. The Icelandic Government has not recognized the annexation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union.
2. On March 12, 1990, the Athing adopted a resolution congratulating the Lithuanian people on their declaration of independence.
3. Iceland has supported the Baltic States' request for observer status at the Nordic Council.
4. On March 23, 1991, the Foreign Minister of Iceland sent Mr. Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister, a letter in which he urged the Soviet Union to initiate talks with the democratically elected representatives of Lithuania without prior conditions.
5. At a special Foreign Ministers' meeting of the Council of Europe in Lisbon on March 24, 1990, convened to discuss relations with the States of Central and Eastern Europe, Iceland's Foreign Minister supported the Baltic States' quest for independence.
6. In his address before the CSCE conference on Human Dimension in Copenhagen on June 5, 1990, Iceland's Foreign Minister discussed the legitimate aspirations of the Baltic States for independence.

7. Iceland's Foreign Minister has supported the Baltic States' quest for independence at NATO Foreign Ministers' meetings throughout 1990.
8. In his speeches before the General Assembly of the United Nations on September 24, 1990, and again at a CSCE Foreign Ministers' meeting in New York on October 3, 1990, Iceland's Foreign Minister announced Iceland's full support for the Baltic States' membership to the CSCE.
9. The Prime Minister spoke out in support of the Baltic States in his speech at the CSCE Summit in Paris on November 20, 1990.
10. Iceland and Denmark organized the press conference of the Foreign Ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on November 20, 1990, in connection with the CSCE Summit.
11. The Althing passed a resolution on December 18, 1990, in support of the Baltic States' demands for independence, and on the Government's offer of Reykjavik as a meeting place. The resolution was forwarded to the National Congresses of the Baltic States.
12. Iceland's Foreign Minister summoned the Soviet Ambassador to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on January 10, 1991, and expressed the Government's concern over developments in Lithuania and urged that military force should not be used.

13. The Icelandic Foreign Minister sent the Foreign Ministers of NATO member States and the NATO Secretary General a letter on January 11, 1991, where he suggests that they write to the Soviet Foreign Minister urging the Soviet Government to put an end to acts of violence in Lithuania.
14. The Icelandic Prime Minister wrote a letter to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev on January 13, 1991, urging the Soviet President to put an end to acts of violence by Soviet special forces in Lithuania. Reference was made to the Charter of Paris and the Helsinki Final Act. Iceland's Ambassador in Moscow delivered the letter on January 14, 1991.
15. Iceland's acting Foreign Minister summoned the Soviet Ambassador to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on January 13, 1991, on account of Soviet military action in Lithuania.
16. The North Atlantic Council issued a declaration on January 14, 1991, concerning the situation in Lithuania, making reference among other things to the Helsinki Final Act.
17. The Althing passed a resolution on January 14, 1991, harshly condemning Soviet military action against the Lithuanian people.
18. Iceland's representative at the CSCE meeting in Valletta on the peaceful settlement of disputes discussed the situation in the Baltic States in his speech on January 16, 1991.

19. Iceland's Ambassador in Moscow met with the President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, on January 16, 1991, to discuss the situation in the Baltic States.
20. Iceland's Foreign Minister visited Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia between January 18 and 21, 1991, at the invitation of their Governments. On January 21, 1991, he signed a joint declaration along with Estonian Foreign Minister Lennart Meri.
21. Iceland's acting Foreign Minister met with the Soviet Ambassador on January 21, 1991, concerning news of the Soviet military's actions in Riga.
22. On January 23, 1991, the Government of Iceland announced in a policy statement measures in support of the Baltic States, among other things initiating talks concerning the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations with Lithuania. These measures were presented at a press conference and press statements were sent from the Prime Minister's office as well as the Foreign Ministry.
23. On January 23, 1991, Iceland's Ambassador in Moscow presented Soviet authorities with a Note, requesting information on certain atrocities committed by the Soviet military in Lithuania and Latvia. Reference was made to the Human Dimension of the CSCE in this connection.
24. Iceland's representative at the CSCE meeting of high-level officials in Vienna on January 28-29, 1991, discussed Lithuania and the situation in the Baltic States in his speech.

25. Iceland's Ambassador in Moscow was summoned to the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union on February 5, 1991, and presented with a formal Note of protest from the Soviet Government concerning the Icelandic Government's statement of January 23, 1991.
26. The Althing passed a resolution on February 11, 1991, calling upon the Government to establish diplomatic relations with Lithuania as soon as possible.
27. Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Kvitsinsky presented Iceland's Ambassador in Moscow with a harshly worded Note on February 13, 1991, concerning the Althing resolution of February 11, 1991.
28. The Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Reykjavik presented the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with the Soviet Government's response (P.M.) to Iceland's Note of January 23, 1991, on the CSCE Human Dimension.
29. The Icelandic Foreign Minister presented the Ambassador of the Soviet Union to Iceland on April 12, 1991, with a position paper on the international legal status of the Baltic States and Iceland's intentions to establish diplomatic relations with Lithuania.
30. The Prime Ministers of Estonia and Iceland issued a statement on February 21, 1991, following a meeting in Reykjavik where Iceland expressed its readiness, if asked, to act as a mediator between the Soviet Union and the Baltic States.
31. The Baltic Council adopted a resolution on April 13, 1991, requesting the Icelandic Government to act as a mediator in organizing and concluding

negotiations between the Baltic States and the Soviet Union.

32. A meeting between Lithuanian and Icelandic officials took place in Reykjavik May 14-15, 1991, in preparation of a trade agreement between Lithuania and Iceland.
33. The question of the Baltic States was taken up by the Icelandic representative to the CSCE at the meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials in Prague May 23, 1991.
34. A trade agreement between Lithuania and Iceland was signed in Vilnius August 5, 1991.
35. At the meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Brussels August 21, 1991, the Icelandic Foreign Minister called attention to the need to address the Baltic issue in the aftermath of the failure of the coup attempt in Moscow and the changed circumstances resulting.
36. Following the declaration of the Supreme Councils of Estonia and Latvia on the re-establishment of statehood the Icelandic Foreign Minister, in letters to the Foreign Ministers of Estonia and Latvia dated August 22, 1991, confirmed Iceland's recognition of the two States and announced the readiness of the Government of Iceland to establish formal diplomatic relations.
37. In a letter to President Vytautas Landsbergis of Lithuania of August 22, 1991, the Icelandic Foreign Minister invited the Foreign Minister of Lithuania to join the Foreign Ministers of Estonia and Latvia at a meeting in Reykjavik for the

purpose of signing formal declarations on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iceland and the three Baltic States.