

In order to gain a firm grounding in the perplexing realities of globalization, the Faroe Islands is making massive moves to develop foreign relations at all levels—from defining the country's legal status to working out bi- and multilateral trade agreements.

IT MAY SEEM that in the Faroe Islands, global gales have aroused a new sense of urgency to catch up with tough realities in the wider world. Perhaps inspired by their Viking cousins to the northwest, the slightly more reserved Faroese are now seemingly realizing that somehow, their potential could be tapped more fully.

Looking to utilize his country's energies for a spring cleaning program of trade relations development at multiple levels—and beyond that, an ambitious campaign to mobilize the public in a socio-economic development scheme christened 'Vision 2015'—Prime Minister Jóannes Eidesgaard makes no secret of his political plans and ambitions.

"The vision is that in 2015, the Faroes will be one of the world's best countries to live and work in," Mr Eidesgaard stated. "We want the Faroes to be a country with a strong economy with jobs for everyone, a country in which comprehensive social security systems offer a good and dignified life for all."

Meanwhile at the Prime Minister's Office, officials are busy translating rhetorics into tangible plans. Department of Foreign Affairs director Herluf Sigvaldsson explained that his department's agenda is dominated by practical implications of the political ambitions to increase cooperation with other countries, which includes: full participation in Nordic collaboration, assessing potential



Prime Minister Jóannes Eidesgaard.

TINY COUNTRY TAKES ON GLOBALIZATION

membership in EFTA (European Free Trade Association—Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein) and establish the Four Freedoms (free movement of goods, services, capital, and persons) between the Faroes and the EU.

The program goes on: establishing new representations to foreign countries, cooperation with relevant UN bodies, membership in international organizations, new free trade agreements, tax treaties, international collaboration in education and scientific research.

"Chiefly, the Department of Foreign Affairs is working at five levels," Mr Sigvaldsson said. Firstly, he explained,

the department is dealing with the fundamental question of Faroese independence; secondly, trade relations development—which is where most efforts are currently being concentrated; thirdly, international cooperation on the management of marine resource and the ocean; fourth, national security issues; and fifth, international development aid.

In late 2005, the Faroes became a partner in the Pan-Euro-Med Cumulation of Origin, which includes the EU and applicant countries, EFTA countries, and Mediterranean counterparts. According to Hákun J. Djurhuus, the Head of the Faroese Mission to the EU,

originating in any one of the other countries, without losing their originating status within the pan-Euro-Med zone (diagonal cumulation of origin).

"One condition in using the Cumulation of Origin is that the countries within the system have a bilateral Free Trade Agreement. The Faroes currently has such agreements with the EU, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland."

The free trade agreement signed with Iceland has been presented as a very significant deal and was highlighted as such by the April 2006 visit of an Icelandic trade delegation to the Faroes, headed by Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson. "This is the most comprehensive trade agreement that Iceland has ever been a party to, and it is therefore very fitting that this agreement is between Iceland and the Faroe Islands," Mr Ásgrímsson stated, citing the very close relationship between the two countries.

"Generally speaking, the idea is to establish the free movement of Faroese citizens, businesses, products and services in foreign countries and vice versa," Mr Sigvaldsson said.

Referring to the trade agreement with Iceland, he added: "Viewed in the light of the striking cultural and socio-economic similarities between our two countries, this agreement makes obvious sense. We have the best conditions imaginable for generating mutual economic growth from the agreement—after all, our languages are very similar and our peoples are familiar with each other on all levels, there are a lot of links, both business and personal, our economies and living conditions are comparable, as is the size of both populations, and home markets."

As to the politically sensitive question of independence, the way ahead as agreed by the present coalition govern-

THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Department of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 64, FO 110 Tórshavn

http://www.tinganes.fo
E-Mail: info@tinganes.fo
Tel.: +298 351010
Fax: +298 351015

Prime Minister: Jóannes Eidesgaard

Permanent Secretary: Marjun Hanusardóttir

Department of Foreign Affairs Director:
Herluf Sigvaldsson

Press Secretary: Björt Samuelsen
Tel.: +298 351041

The Prime Minister's Office is the administrative office of the Prime Minister, charged with preparing, carrying out and following up tasks presented to the Prime Minister according to the constitution; of these tasks, the Department of Foreign Affairs is responsible for coordinating matters relating to foreign policy.

The Mission of the Faroes to the European Union
73 Aarlenstraat – Rue d'Arlon 73
B-1040 Brussels, Belgium
Tel.: +32 (2) 233 08 55
Counsellor / Head of Mission:
Hákun J. Djurhuus

The Representation of the Faroes in London
55 Sloan Street
London SW1X 9SR, UK
Tel.: +44 (0) 20 7333 0227
Counsellor/Representative of the Faroes:
Sigmundur Ísfield

The Representation of the Faroes in Copenhagen
Strandgade 91, 4. sal
DK-1401 København K, Denmark
Tel.: +45 32 83 37 70
Counsellor/Representative of the Faroes:
Herálvur Joensen

ment is to first make full use of the Home Rule Act with later amendments—which means gradually assuming responsibility for any and all areas of legislation and administration pertaining to the Faroes, in accordance with existing agreements with the government of Denmark. Under this framework, the Faroes is governed largely as an independent country with national security as the principal area of exception, while it's up to the Faroese people to decide whether and when to establish national sovereignty.