



LETTER TO THE ICELANDIC CHESS FEDERATION BY FIDE PRESIDENT ARKADY DVORKOVICH

To the Icelandic Chess Federation and our entire Icelandic chess family:

It is my distinct honour and great pleasure to congratulate you on the centenary since the formation of the Icelandic Chess Federation.

For many, Iceland is a beautiful volcanic island in the middle of the northern Atlantic. And that is absolutely true. But for the chess world – Iceland is much, much more. Iceland is one of the most important global chess centres, with a rich chess history and a strong chess culture; it is a true home of chess. This is also underscored by a remarkable fact – that Iceland, despite its size, is one of the top countries in the world with the most Grandmasters per capita.

We cannot talk about chess without talking about Iceland.

It was here that in 1957 the World Student Team Championship brought together players who would go on to become the greatest names in the history of our sport – Mikhail Tal, Boris Spassky, Bent Larsen, Lajos Portisch, Lev Polugaevky and, of course, Fridrik Olafsson.

Since its inception in 1964, the annual Reykjavik Open, has become one of the most important events in the world chess calendar, attracting many players from all over the globe.

Undoubtedly, the 1972 World Championship Match between Fischer and Spassky is arguably the most famous moment in Icelandic chess history. As we know, this “Match of the Century” was much more than a chess match, and it took a lot of strength, skill and diplomatic nuance to organise it. Iceland not only made a success out of it – it made history with it, capturing global attention, which led to a boost in the popularity of chess worldwide.

In 2005 – when no country dared – Iceland decided to grant Bobby Fischer citizenship as a humanitarian act. And it is here where he spent his final days, where he is buried and where a great chess centre in Selfoss commemorates his life and the 1972 match.

No history of chess in Iceland – or indeed of chess itself – is complete without the late Fridrik Olafsson. Iceland’s first Grandmaster, participant of the 1958–1960 World Championship cycle, and the President of FIDE from 1978 to 1982, Olafsson was a true gentleman, someone who has given so much to chess and whose work is deeply respected.

All of these events and successes would not have been possible without a strong and dedicated organisation, such as The Icelandic Chess Federation. Founded a century ago, it faithfully serves not just the Icelandic chess community, but the entire chess world – organising events, providing educational opportunities and promoting the sport.

As the saying goes, there is no future without the past. In the case of Iceland, the strong foundations laid down over the last 100 years point to a bright future from which the whole chess world will continue to prosper.

On behalf of FIDE and the global chess community, thank you for your dedication, your work and your continuous contribution to chess.

May the next 100 years be equally rich and successful!

Arkady Dvorkovich
President of the International Chess Federation (FIDE)