

**Speech delivered by H.E. Mr. Kaj Leo Holm Johannesen,
Prime Minister of the Government of the Faroes, at the
Celebration of the Faroese Flag Day in London on Tuesday
the 28th of April 2015**

Your Excellencies, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening

I would first like to thank H.E. Ambassador Grube for hosting this evening's event along with Mr Hansen, Minister Counsellor of the Faroes. A wonderful spring evening, stylish setting, in good company; these are all the ingredients for a great evening.

It is now 75 years since the British Government along with her wartime allies recognised our flag as the official flag of the Faroes. Today the Flag Day is an occasion to celebrate the Faroes, reflect on the past and consider the future.

This year also marks 70 years since the end of the Second World War.

Churchill posted a large number of British soldiers to the Faroes during the war. These soldiers won the hearts and minds of the Faroese who have fond memories of the British stay in the Faroes.

This year we are once again honoured by the presence of Mr Harry Wilson, who served in the Faroes as a British soldier at that time.

On behalf of the Faroese people I would like to extend my gratitude to Mr Wilson and all other British soldiers who served to defend our islands.

Britain is our closest neighbour; we share a maritime border and the island and maritime culture. Britain is also one of our closest trading partners. We export large quantities of our fisheries products to Britain. Chances are if you have your traditional Friday night fish and chips; the fish is most likely Faroese.

The author, William Heinesen, famously described our capital as “*the navel of the world*”. The world may yet have come to regard the Faroes as any kind of centre of the universe but the Faroese have always agreed on the importance of the Faroes.

A place of remarkable natural beauty, set in the middle of fertile fishing grounds at the entrance to the Arctic.

The Faroes can offer a lifestyle of running in untouched nature, swimming in the ocean with amazing diving sites, world class restaurants and a close-knit community. Music in its many forms is an intrinsic part of our culture; no party is complete without a sing along, brass bands perform on occasions like today as well as choirs, there is the traditional Faroese dancing where the rhythm is

created by the footfall on a wooden floor accompanied by great storytelling of love and war. We also have strong singer song writer traditions.

This year the world came to the Faroes as we were fortunate to experience a full solar eclipse. It was a beautiful and humbling experience; you get a real sensation of being part of a solar system. Though some people argued that the sudden weather change from overcast and rain to clear skies and sun during the eclipse was indeed more remarkable. After all this is a place where you have the midnight sun and the Northern lights.

On the international arena we have a number of alliances. We are active in the West Nordic Council, Nordic Council and the Arctic Council. We participate in the UN and UN organisations such as the International Maritime Organisation, Food and Agricultural Organisation and United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation. We have affinity to small and island nations and all seafarers' nations. We also play an active role in managing marine resources.

We aim to strengthen these relations and contribute to the community of countries in the world.

Another year has passed; our economy continues to grow, our industries, in particular pelagic fisheries, aquaculture and tourism are blooming and we have come to specialise in hand knit organic sustainable fashion.

However there is no room for complacency. As an open economy resilience is built by variety and increased market access. Therefore it is my government's priority to improve market access for our products in order to make our society to continue to thrive and prosper.

Ladies and gentlemen

This is the last Flag Day celebration that Mr Hansen will be hosting in London for now. Mr Hansen will return to the Faroes this autumn and continue his service to his country at the Prime Minister's Office. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Mr Hansen for his excellent service promoting British-Faroese relations.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your time and consideration and I hope we will have an enjoyable evening together.