

Ávarp við setningu Jarðhitaháskóla Sþ mánudaginn 2. maí 2011
Einar Gunnarsson, ráðuneytisstjóri

Professor Kazuhiko Takeuchi, Director Ingvar Birgir Fridleifsson, distinguished guests, dear UNU GTP fellows,

On behalf of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland let me extend to you a wholeheartedly welcome to this 33rd annual session of the UNU GTP.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is the responsible agency for Iceland's International Development Cooperation and is very proud of the continuous and strong efforts made by the UNU GT Programme to attract high quality specialists from a diverse background, such as your group, a record number of 30 individuals representing 16 countries. I would like to take this opportunity and thank Director Fridleifsson and his entire team for their relentless work.

The strategy for Iceland's international development cooperation for the next four years 2011-2014 has been presented to parliament. The strategy identifies renewable energy as a focus area and the UNU as one of four key multilateral institutions we will continue to work with. In the strategy a special emphasis is placed upon capacity building in areas where Icelanders have acquired strong scientific and hands-on skills. The Geothermal Training Programme is an excellent example of this.

Special emphasis has been placed on a close cooperation with the United Nations University, and I would also like to take this opportunity and extend my Minister's appreciation to Professor Takeuchi, Vice Rector of the UNU for the excellent cooperation between the University and Iceland.

In addition to the Geothermal Training Programme, Iceland has also been operating the Fisheries Training Programme since 1998 and Land Restoration Programme, first as a pilot program from 2007 and as a formal UNU program since 2010.

These three training programs represent probably the most important developmental contribution by Iceland over the last three decades.

Enhanced geothermal utilization is of significant importance for the world to tackle global climate change. Iceland takes an active part in working with the countries of the world in discussing ways to strengthen the role of renewable energy in the world's future economy. By giving developing countries access to cutting-edge energy

technology an opportunity can arise for them to leapfrog carbon-based industrial technologies and thereby hopefully diminish the impacts of climate change, which already are hurting developing countries and complicating efforts at poverty reduction, a key target of the Millennium Development Goals.

Iceland's foreign policy places special emphasis on playing an active role within international organizations that are working towards combating climate change. This is done within the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, where we are now in the midst of preparing for RIO+ 20 to be held next year. IRENA –the newly founded International Renewable Energy Agency that has been set up to promote utilization of renewable energy resources in developing countries and ARGeo –the African Rift Geothermal Development Program, to name just three. Within these forums Iceland continuously promotes enhanced utilization of renewable energy resources as an important and viable alternative to fossil fuels based economies.

Geothermal resources are not accessible in every corner of the world. However, recent research projects in geothermal utilization for example of low-temperature sources, deep drilling and advanced geothermal technologies, such as Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS) can all greatly expand the potential of geothermal energy to areas of the world traditionally not seen as particularly suited for geothermal exploitation.

Iceland is currently working closely, through bilateral cooperation agreements with all the major economic powers of the world in the geothermal sector. These countries are the United States, China, India and an agreement is being prepared with Russia. In addition Iceland has special agreements with numerous other countries, just to indicate to you the significance the Icelandic Government places on geothermal as an important, viable alternative energy resource for the world at large.

In addition to bilateral and multilateral cooperation Iceland is partnering various international research projects with different countries. The international partnership for Energy Development in Island Nations (EDIN) is a program aimed at helping islands across the globe to adopt energy efficiency measures and deploy renewable energy technologies and similarly, the International Partnership for Geothermal

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Technology (IPGT) is a forum for government and industry leaders to coordinate their efforts, and collaborate on projects.

To summarize, Iceland places great importance on geothermal in all international cooperation. Iceland firmly believes that combating climate change will take concerted efforts of all countries and that no country can be excluded in that battle. Already we see exciting developments take place regarding geothermal exploitation such as in Kenya, where big plans are underway, as is also the case in other countries of Eastern Africa. Similarly, geothermal projects are being developed in Asian countries like Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and China. Icelandic firms and institutions are engaged in some of these and many other countries.

Geothermal energy is one of the ways in which to tackle climate change and you the UNU GTP fellows will be among the key players in securing successful outcome in the years ahead.

In conclusion I would like to wish you all, the very best in your studies during the forth coming six months as well as a pleasant stay here in Iceland.