

UNU Geothermal Training Programme
Graduation Ceremony
October 17 2012

Address by
Mr. Hermann Ingólfsson
Director General for International and Security Affairs

Dear UNU fellows, Director and employees of the UNU Geothermal Training Programme, Director General of Orkustofnun, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

It is a pleasure for me to address this 36th graduation ceremony of the UNU Geothermal Training Programme.

Here before us, we have 29 fellows who are graduating from the Programme, from fourteen different countries in five continents! As of today, you will be a part of the group of 583 fellows that have finished six months' training from the UNU-GTP. A group of specialists that Iceland is truly proud of having hosted and contributed to your geothermal expertise.

In addition, seventeen people have been studying towards their Masters' degree here in Iceland during this year, and two in Kenya towards their PhDs. Then, we must not forget the short-courses that the Training Programme holds in the field, making the training available to many other experts that are not able to do their training in Iceland.

Dear fellows,

I do not have to emphasize how important your work is for your home countries. This you know very well. Harnessing geothermal energy can make a lot of difference. It can make a difference for economic and social development, for sustainability and for mitigating the effects of climate change. It is, indeed, a smart way of pursuing technological progress while caring for our planet.

Volcanic activity gets Iceland into the world news every few years but over the past decades, we have learned to harness this great resource that is geothermal energy. Today, Iceland relies almost entirely on renewable energy, from hydro and geothermal resources, for its electricity and heating needs.

At the same time - only 14% of global geothermal potential has been harnessed. In East Africa alone, geothermal energy could bring new, clean, sustainable energy to millions of people within a few years.

Therefore, Iceland has been an active advocate for the harnessing of geothermal energy in international fora. During the negotiations for the Rio+20 conference in 2012 and throughout the work on formulating the Sustainable Development Goals, Iceland has emphasised the harnessing of renewable energy. It has in fact been one of the four focus areas that Iceland has advocated for during these processes.

We were therefore pleased that both the decisions in Rio and the outcome document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals from July, reflect the importance of renewable energy. Goal seven on “*Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*”, suggested in the latter document, is a goal that must be maintained in the new development goals to be negotiated on in 2015.

At the same time, as some of you may know, Iceland made a compact with the World Bank on geothermal development in East Africa which aims to spur geothermal development along the Great African Rift Valley. This compact makes Iceland the Bank’s single largest partner in the field of geothermal development, of which we are of course very proud.

Our bilateral development cooperation agency, ICEIDA, has been implementing the first phase of the compact where a total of nine countries have expressed interest for collaboration, and implementation and preparations are currently underway in all of those countries. This first phase is co-funded by Iceland and the Nordic Development Fund.

Dear guests,

Gender equality is a key pillar in Iceland’s foreign policy. Besides the obvious, that gender equality is basic human rights, it is our belief that without gender equality and women’s empowerment there can be no sustainable development.

It is therefore very positive that almost a third of the fellows graduating here today are women, which is above the average for the UNU-GTP of 20%. I know that the director and the employees strive for gender balance each year – and I urge them to continue to do so.

However, it's important that we think farther than that. We must integrate gender equality into each and every aspect of our work.

With that in mind, I urge the Geothermal Training Programme to take the next step and integrate gender equality throughout the programme. Here, the UNU Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme is a valuable partner that can help advance gender equality, and at the same time strengthen the UNU family here in Iceland. Finally, allow me to conclude by congratulating you fellows again on your graduation. I know the last six months have been challenging for you, both professionally and personally, but I hope you have enjoyed your stay in Iceland.

Thank you.