

Ávarp

við útskrift úr jarðhitaskóla háskóla sameinuðu þjóðanna,

18. október 2019

Dear fellows of the United Nations University Geothermal Training Programme, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Minister for tourism, industry and innovation, it is an honour for me to address you today on this 41st graduation ceremony of the UNU Geothermal Training Programme. Madame Minister Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir could not attend this ceremony, but she asked me to send her best regards and good wishes to you all.

The Geothermal Training Programme of the United Nations University is, as you know, a postgraduate training programme, aiming at assisting developing countries in capacity building within geothermal exploration and development. The programme consists of six months annual training for practicing professionals from developing and transitional countries with significant geothermal potential. Priority is given to countries where geothermal development is under way, in order to maximize technology transfer.

The programme has operated in Iceland since 1979 and is a co-operation between the United Nations University and the Government of Iceland, and is hosted by the National Energy Authority. Today we are graduating 24 students from 15 countries (Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Philippines Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, China, Montserrat, Nigeria, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Tanzania). After this graduation ceremony today, you will be among the 718 fellows from 63 countries who have finished the six months training programme here in Iceland.

The Government of Iceland has referred to this group as our Geothermal Ambassadors and we are very proud of the 718 Geothermal Ambassadors we have graduated since 1979. In the last six months you have gathered valuable knowledge and expertise in the field of geothermal utilisation, and hopefully you will be able to use that knowledge in the various work which you will undertake in the future.

Time can be measured in many different ways. If we think of our lifetime, six months might not be seen as a long time, but six months away from family and friends, in a strange and different country, is a long time. I think that it shows courage and determination of you to come to Iceland and to live and work here for six months. It is therefore worth celebrating your achievements here today.

We are constantly reminded of that the world is at a crossroad when it comes to energy and climate issues. Sustainable utilization of renewable energy resources will be a key factor in tackling the challenging climate issues we are facing.

Renewable energy resources are not distributed evenly around the world. Here in Iceland we are so fortunate to have plenty of renewable energy resources, hydropower and geothermal energy, which we use for our advantages in our daily life.

There is more to geothermal energy than electricity production and district heating. Innovation, research and development, brings us new ideas that are being developed to create more value from this valuable resource under our feet.

This includes new technology for traditional usage, such as drying fish products for export and farming of tropical fish species, to more novel products such as cosmetics from the minerals in the geothermal brine and production of synthetic fuels from the gasses associated with the geothermal steam.

Innovation and further development of the technologies of harnessing the heat inside our planet, on a global scale, will play an important role in reducing the use of fossil fuels and reducing CO₂ emissions.

And of course that means that you, the geothermal experts – the geothermal ambassadors, will have to be on board and have an important role to play. In general, our common task is to bring more awareness to the possibilities of geothermal energy, in a global context.

The UNU Geothermal Training Programme is very important in this regard, and something we take pride in as I have already mentioned.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is one additional thing my minister wanted to share with you today.

That relates to the fact that the energy sector, worldwide, has previously been dominated by men to a large extent.

We in Iceland strongly feel that it is important that we get more women into this sector and I see that we are on the right track in getting there.

This year the share of women in the group of graduates from the UNU-GTP is 46%. This is a higher share than in recent years and that is important.

In April next year Iceland will host the World Geothermal Congress. We are busy preparing for this large event and are looking forward to it, as this has been referred to as the Olympics of Geothermal. Hopefully some of you will have the opportunity to come and participate in that event.

It has already been suggested that this event would be a great opportunity for all the former fellows of the UNU Geothermal Training Programme to visit Reykjavik and have some kind of a Reunion. Hopefully, we will see you there.

Dear Fellows.

On behalf of the Government of Iceland I sincerely congratulate you with your graduation today and your achievements. And I welcome you to our group of Geothermal Ambassadors.

You are now all part of an important network of geothermal experts.

I hope that you have enjoyed your time here in Iceland and we wish you and your families all the best in the future.

Finally I would like to thank Mr. Lúðvík Georgsson, Director of the UNU Geothermal Training Program. Lúðvík will retire as Director of the UNU program by the end of this year. Lúðvík became the Director of UNU-GTP in 2013, after being the Deputy-Director since 1990. He took over from Dr. Ingvar B. Fridleifsson the founding Director. A new Director, Mr. Guðni Axelsson, will take office in January.

On behalf of the minister and the ministry I thank you Lúðvík for your outstanding work in this field, for the past decades, and we wish you all the best in the future.

Thank you.