

Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir,

Minister of Industry and Commerce

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

It is a real honour for me as the minister that has energy as one of many things in its profile, to have the opportunity to address you today on this 35th graduation ceremony of the UNU Geothermal Training Programme.

You are now among 554 fellows from 53 countries who have finished the six months training programme here in Iceland.

It is a challenge to find renewable alternatives to fossil fuel, alternatives like geothermal energy, but I would like to mention a challenge that is more related to your personal live, and that is the challenge of leaving home for six months – to live in a country that has climate that is so different from the climate most of you are used to.

An old Icelandic saying is that to seek wisdom and be wise, you have to travel away from home. And that you have done, and you should be proud of yourself and I do hope that you leave Iceland with good memories and valuable knowledge about how to utilize the important energy resource – Geothermal.

We here in Iceland are very proud of the UNU Geothermal training programme.

In our international and globalised world, where the threat of climate change and global warming looms large, new energy technology and new solutions and new alternatives for the production of clean energy are really important.

The idea of the Geothermal training programme has from the start been based on the idea that somehow the study for each fellow could in away be tailor made for each student based on the demand for that exact knowledge in the home country.

It is not enough to have access to geothermal recourses if you cannot utilise the resource in a responsible way without causing damage to the resources. With the right knowledge the resource can be utilised in a sustainable manner to boost the economy in the country.

It is not only the six months training here in Iceland that we can boost of.

The UNU-GTP has been in cooperation with the University of Iceland, where 35 students have graduated with Master's degree and this year the first with doctorate degree graduated, Ms. Pacifica Ogola, the first African to graduate with a doctor degree from the Universtity of Iceland.

In addition to the programmes here in Iceland a short tailor maid courses where local scientists and decision makers have been trained have been held in Africa, Asia and South-America and there are more to come. The next one is a 3 weeks course that is planned in Kenya next month. These courses are Iceland's contribution to the UNUs Millenium goales.

The UNU-Geothermal Training Programme is facing changes these days as the founding Director of the Programm, is now leaving the front, retiring after after a very successful work for 35 years.

I think it is fair to say that Ingvar Birgir has given the Programme its soul all these years and though he has not been alone in this work I think it is fair to say that his name is closely linked to the name of the UNU Geothermal Training Programme. I would like to use this opportunity to thank Ingvar Birgir on behalf of the Ministry for his contribution to the outspread of the geothermal knowledge around the world.

As I said before we are proud of the Geothermal Training Programme, and therefore earlier this year the Ministry proposed the UNU Geothermal Training Programme for The Nordic Council's Nature and Environment Prize. This time there were 24 proposals and ten out of them are now nominated, and the Geothermal Training Programme is one of the nominees. The price will be awarded on October 30th and of course we see it as very appropriated that the price would be given to the UNU-Geothermal Training Programme.

The nomination is based on the fact that the programme, with Ingvar Birgir in the front, has played a major role in introducing the possibilities of utilization of Geothermal in the developing and transitional countries, where over 550 fellows have finished the six months training the last 35 years. Most of the people that has participated in the Programme here in Iceland are leading in the geothermal industry in their home country, and what is more, all around the Geothermal-world is a close connected network of geothermal experts, willing to use their knowledge for the benefit of a better world where geothermal plays a bigger role.

Dear Fellows, now you are a part of that important network and I see you as the true ambassadors for geothermal, I know that the geothermal community will from now on be richer, gaining from your knowledge

Soon you will go home, meet with your families and then start to spread the knowledge of geothermal resources, their utilisation, the environmental advantages of geothermal power production compared to fossil fuel and help build up the geothermal industry in your country.

I hope that when you look back you will not only think of this rainy summer, but think of this time you spent here in Iceland as a pleasant and educational.

I wish you and your families all the best in your future tasks.