



**Greetings
from
the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson**

How do we make a difference in the world? How do we contribute to improved well-being economic progress and richer lives for others? How do we enhance scientific knowledge, encourage new discoveries and create a new vision of the future?

For a small nation these are important challenges, guidelines for our cooperation with countries near and far. The transformation of global relationships has made it paramount for communities to contribute to the advancement of mankind in certain significant ways. The formal premises of sovereignty and independence are no longer sufficient. In order to achieve recognition nations have to be pioneers in areas of relevance for others.

Iceland has been blessed with unique features. The Almighty decided to make it the centre of the on-going creation. The movement of the continental plates, the forces which tear them apart, the resulting volcanic eruptions, the display by the geysers and the trembling earth, the emergence of new islands out of the ocean, the moving lava, the fire below the glaciers – this magnificent display has made Iceland a testing ground for the challenge brought to man by these powerful natural forces. Will we rise to the task and be able to harness the energy produced in such abundance?

Our scientists and technicians have certainly turned these endeavours into a pioneering field which has enabled our country to establish significant cooperation with nations all over the world: in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe – and consequently Iceland has enjoyed recognition and good-will. Within the United Nations Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland has been one of the successes of the university network initiated by the organisation. Now hundreds of

specialists who received their training in Iceland are at work in different parts of the world.

Geothermal research and the harnessing of the resources for the production of electricity, for heating towns and villages, for creating spas and recreational and sports facilities, for growing flowers and vegetables, have brought Iceland to the forefront in the utilisation of geothermal energy and thus consolidated our global position in significant ways.

We have consequently been able to create partnerships with China and Slovakia, Hungary and Russia, El Salvador and Nicaragua, Kenya, the Philippines and Turkey to name only a few of the 50 or so countries where Icelandic scientists and experts have in recent decades made substantial contributions.

Cooperation in the field of geothermal energy has at the opening of the 21st century become one of the main pillars of Iceland's international relations. This scientific knowledge provides our nation with a more solid position in the world – provides answers to the important questions I raised at the outset.

During my presidency I have on numerous occasions witnessed the significance of our contribution in the field of geothermal energy. Four recent State Visits are good examples: the visit of the President of China Jiang Zemin to Iceland last year and my own visits to Hungary and Slovenia this year and to Russia last year; in each and every one geothermal cooperation was among the chief tasks on the agenda.

I am therefore deeply convinced that it is of utmost importance for us to maintain leadership in this field and to strengthen our cooperation with scientists and experts all over the world

It is in this spirit that I welcome the convening of this international conference to discuss the multiple intergrated uses of geothermal resources and congratulate the United Nations University Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland on its 25th anniversary.

The gathering of so many distinguished scientists and scholars, experts and technicians in our country manifests our determination to continue to explore this magnificent energy resource and thus enrich and improve the lives of our fellow human beings all over the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Ólafur Ragnar Grímur', written in a cursive style.