

**Strengthening Arctic Co-operation and Co-ordination
on Ocean Stewardship
Glacier Conference, Anchorage 30-31 August 2015**

Perspectives from Iceland
Minister for Foreign Affairs H.E. Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson

Honourable Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to participate with you in this important event and express my gratitude to Secretary Kerry and the United States for organising this meeting in such a beautiful and appropriate setting.

The discussions here have brought our attention to the many urgent issues facing the Arctic today and how many of the challenges can only be addressed through co-operation at the regional, national and international levels.

The scientific evidence is clear – the average temperatures in the Arctic are rising at more than twice the global rate. We have to take immediate action to slow this pace, starting in Paris in December where we hope to agree on an ambitious long-term Climate Agreement.

We should be remindful that the Arctic has historically been bountiful in renewable and non-renewable energy. We speak from first-hand experience, as we have been fortunate enough to be able to harvest geothermal and hydropower for decades in Iceland.

What are the basic components of renewable energy – what do we need to actually make it work?

- We need renewable energy generation,
- there has to be community planning,
- a satisfactory distribution and storage infrastructure,
- and finally, we need energy efficiency.

Let me say few words on each of these.

Firstly, for the renewable energy generation, there are mainly three economically viable alternatives in the Arctic, namely:

- Hydropower, which constitutes over 70% of Iceland's stationary resources;
- Geothermal power, which can be found in various parts of the Arctic and provides for all space-heating in Iceland, and;
- Wind power.

Secondly, community planning is important to facilitate distribution of energy in an economical manner. Some of the communities in the Arctic have limited urban planning, which entails costly methods in bringing fuel to those communities.

Thirdly, in the more remote parts of the Arctic, distribution and storage of fossil fuels is expensive and can be highly risky. Local renewable energy sources and increased energy efficiency will, therefore, bring more economical and environmental benefits than in non-arctic countries. In areas where there are no distribution systems for electricity and district heating, the possible solution could be energy quality management, using waste energy for heating or using centralised heat pump systems to provide heat.

Lastly, the benefits of energy efficiency can be significant. In harsh areas like the Arctic, improved standards of insulation in buildings is probably the most effective measure to increase energy efficiency. In this region, saving energy is smart economics, providing security and comfort to the people.

So, what concrete measures can we take to increase the share of renewables in the Arctic?

To start with we can ask the International Renewable Energy Agency –IRENA, to map out all available green energy resources. This will facilitate support for green energy projects from multilateral financial frameworks, such as from the Global Geothermal Alliance, and here, mapping the Arctic could be a strategic way forward.

We should also look into how community planning can support energy distribution, both for existing and new communities. Finally, creating common standards in the region for energy efficiency will be an important step.

Ladies and gentlemen.

The Icelandic story on the use of renewable energy is really “best practices” on how to use resources in a viable manner to create better living standards. This story can also become the story of the Arctic region.

Our use of renewable resources is, however, not limited to sustainable energy development. As you know, the marine environment is of crucial importance to Iceland, and in fact, to all of us.

Strengthening Arctic Co-operation and Co-ordination on Ocean Stewardship requires close consultations and an inclusive rather than exclusive approach.

For Iceland, which has been successful in utilising *green* energy, future challenges will also include keeping the oceans *blue*. Iceland is among the leading fishing nations of the world, our economy is heavily dependent on the sea. We have been informed that the US Government is in the process of developing a new policy that aims at fighting IUU fishing worldwide. Iceland strongly supports international measures to fight illegal and unregulated fishing, and is also in favour of individual countries’ efforts to that effect. It is important that such measures are based on the best available scientific data and knowhow, and Iceland is willing and able to contribute to such findings.

Our policy is therefore to maintain a healthy ocean environment and ensure sustainable utilisation. Faced with challenges like acidification, which poses a particular threat to Arctic waters and can only be addressed by halting carbon emissions, Iceland is committed to continue to be one of the leading advocates for the oceans.

Let me conclude by saying that coming here together in the GLACIER conference is an important venue for us and a stepping stone along the way to Paris. It gives us an opportunity to take stock, share thoughts and past practices, and discuss ways to enhance our cooperation, guided by our shared interests. We cannot afford to lose time – the future is now!

Thank you!