



Speech
by
the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson
at
the Award Ceremony
Zayed Future Energy Prize
Abu Dhabi
15 January 2013

Your Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Your Excellencies
Dear friends

In recent months, on all continents, extreme weather - storms, floods, draughts, heat waves and heavy snowfalls – has brought home the message: our climate is out of balance; profound and disconcerting changes are on our doorstep.

From New York to Northern China, from the Himalayas to Antarctica, from the Emirates to the Arctic, the wakeup calls are in abundance.

As the weather patterns of our planet are a closely woven fabric of interdependencies, the melting of the sea ice in my part of the world and the wider Arctic causes, some months later, severe weather events in faraway Asian countries. This truth was told by the Chinese scientists who last summer sailed on the icebreaker Snow Dragon from Shanghai to Iceland, a pioneering journey close to the North Pole; a truth confirmed again in the last few weeks.

Furthermore, the retreat of the Himalayan glaciers could periodically drain the great rivers of India and China, threatening the food security and the present lifestyle of almost three billion people.

And yet, without profound transformation of our economies, even more dramatic disasters may be in store for our children and

grandchildren, as we all now live in an ice-dependent world. With the melting of only half of the Greenland ice sheet and only a quarter of Antarctica's, sea levels all over the world would, according to scientists, rise more than 20 meters, putting thousands of cities and towns under water, wiping entire countries off the map.

Thus, my friends, our times call for bold, preventive actions, call for visionary leaders to bring positive and practical results, call for a new journey inspired by the life of Sheikh Zayed who, by example, taught his people to respect the environment while paving the way to a prosperous future.

The prizes awarded here tonight honour his legacy, demonstrate how hope is indeed realistic; that together we can create a more sustainable world, fending off the impending disasters.

After a multitude of nominations, thorough examinations by experts, and profound deliberations by the jury, we will shortly present the winners – innovators, activists, entrepreneurs and also, for the first time, the High School pupils from different continents, telling us that yes, indeed, the young generation is ready for action.

Inspired by Sheikh Zayed, Abu Dhabi has become a centre for global dialogue on renewable energy and a sustainable future. The success of those efforts is a true testament to the conviction of the modern leadership of this great country, of the willingness of its people to bring others, like Sheikh Zayed did in his time, into new fields, with paths towards constructive cooperation.

The winners tonight show that change is possible, that vision and innovative thinking holds through practical endeavours, great promises for us all. They are indeed true heirs to the legacy of Sheikh Zayed.

And for me and my fellow jury members it has been a privilege to join His Highness, Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed and all our friends in Abu Dhabi, on this extraordinary journey.