



Address
by
the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson
when Accepting the Degree of
Doctor Honoris Causa

Université Laval
Quebec
24 February 2015

Distinguished Rector
Professors, scientists
Dear friends

With great humility I accept the honor now awarded by Université Laval and seek inspiration for further endeavors from your recognition of my service to Arctic cooperation, to the community of scientists and researchers who have been at the forefront in our efforts to seek a sustainable and successful Arctic future.

Throughout my public life, I have always found guidelines in the world of scholarly knowledge, a conviction molded by the responsibility I had in my younger years for introducing social sciences to the academic world of my country, bringing the discipline of political research and empirical civic studies into our culture.

In our times, universities have increasingly provided the foundation of progress, served as power stations of dynamic dialog and path-breaking research, mapping out avenues which continue to open up to our societies new fields of discovery and progress.

This has indeed been a challenging role and now, in the Arctic, a service not just to science but also of unique significance for all of mankind; the Arctic, a large part of Planet Earth, which for centuries,

even millennia, remained unknown, hidden from the world of knowledge, except in the cultural tradition of the indigenous communities who gathered wisdom from their eternal struggles with the forces of nature.

Never before have the nations of the world so suddenly faced a new responsibility over such a large part of our planet, a territory ranging from Alaska across northern Canada, to Greenland and the Nordic countries, into the multiple time zones of the Russian tundra, also embracing vast oceans, alternately open or frozen, rich reservoirs of resources critical for economies, large and small; the territory where the interaction between people and ice will determine the future of every country on all continents.

The Arctic, once remote and mysterious, has now become the Global Arctic, where more than half of the largest economies in the world have, in one way or another, established a presence, stated their interests.

For the nations and the communities of the Arctic states, this is indeed a new reality, a challenge without precedent in our history or common experience.

How we conduct our dialog and cooperation, how we jointly advance informed and democratic decision-making, will be the test of our success and our global and moral responsibility.

In these endeavors science and research must provide the solid foundations, universities become active and creative partners, making knowledge the pillar of all Arctic advances.

It has been my privilege to work closely with scholars, scientists and researchers in many Arctic disciplines, to help in the foundation of the Northern Research Forum more than fifteen years ago and bring universities and scientific institutions into the new Assembly of the Arctic Circle, now the largest annual international gathering of Arctic partners.

The honor you have granted me will strengthen my dedication to our common endeavors, be an inspiration to enhance the importance of knowledge and science in the future of Arctic cooperation, thus allowing us together to build ever-growing alliances, enabling our countries, Canada and Iceland, and the other Arctic states, to shoulder our shared Arctic responsibility and rise to the challenges on which the future destiny of human kind will depend.