



**A message
from
the President of Iceland,
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson,
on the occasion of the
presentation of the
Global Energy International Award
to
Professor Thorsteinn Sigfusson
in St. Petersburg
9 June 2007**

Technology was the key to Iceland's development in the twentieth century as we tamed geothermal forces and harnessed rivers for energy and electricity production. Within a single generation, our country was converted from a coal-based system to the most successful renewable energy economy in the world.

On the basis of this achievement, our scientists decided to create international partnerships to examine how hydrogen could fit into the framework of further progress.

In this endeavour they were perhaps inspired by the famous French novelist and visionary Jules Verne, who in 1874 published the famous book "Mysterious Island", describing a fictional island in the southern seas and including a vision of a hydrogen economy. The idea that coal could be replaced by hydrogen was his brilliant contribution; now it remains for Iceland to transform itself into a real island developing the hydrogen energy economy of the future.

The leadership of this project has in recent years been provided by the outstanding Professor Thorsteinn I. Sigfusson.

Shortly after moving to Iceland in the 1980s, after completing successful research at the famous Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, England, Professor Sigfusson began to cooperate with another Icelandic

professor, Dr. Bragi Arnason, who had always advocated the potential of hydrogen.

Professor Sigfusson believed that to establish a hydrogen energy economy would require extensive cooperation between public and private partners. In this vision he drew on his experience in uniting the forces of industry and the scientists at the University of Iceland and on his work within the Icelandic metal industry.

Dr. Sigfusson concluded that the best solution would be to form the company Icelandic New Energy with important contributions from foreign partners: Shell Hydrogen, Norsk Hydro and Daimler. Many individuals have contributed to the success of this adventure, but Jon Bjorn Skulason and Maria Maack deserve special mention.

Dr. Sigfusson was the chairman of the company when the hydrogen fuelling station was built in Reykjavik, the first of its kind in the world, and when three hydrogen buses started to transport people around Reykjavík; this was a part of the now famous ECTOS project.

The dedicated team established within the project has influenced the energy policies of many countries in different parts of the world, including the largest demonstration project ever built, the CUTE project in nine European countries and in Australia.

Professor Sigfusson never stopped thinking about how to utilise the special circumstances provided by Iceland. He defined the concept of "geothermal hydrogen," isolating hydrogen from geothermal gas. He built a system for electrolysing water, using geothermal heat and thermo-electricity for splitting water into its component gases, and also started, together with his colleagues, to use geothermal heat to compress hydrogen with the use of metal hydrides. Thus, a new technology for utilising geothermal energy to produce hydrogen was born and a number of innovative solutions were created. In this way, Iceland obtained a leading position in the field of hydrogen technology.

When the International Partnership for the Hydrogen Economy was established by leading nations of the world in Washington DC in 2003, Professor Thorsteinn Sigfusson became one of the main leaders of this great movement. He has continued his work tirelessly for the International Hydrogen Partnership and has been a frequent lecturer at major conferences and meetings all around the world.

It is a great honour for Iceland that Russia has decided to present the Global Energy International Award to Professor Thorsteinn Sigfusson. In

this way, Russia is sending a clear signal to the international community and providing an important vision of the future.

Together, our two countries, Iceland and Russia, can achieve important results in the global evolution of a new and responsible energy economy. Such a cooperation would fit well within the framework established a few years ago in my discussions with President Vladimir Putin. Now, by giving this splendid award to Professor Thorsteinn Sigfusson Russia has honoured a leader who can play a significant role in this venture.

I express to President Vladimir Putin and the entire Russian nation our profound thanks for this honour, and congratulate Professor Thorsteinn Sigfusson on his extraordinary achievements.