



Opening Address
by
The President of Iceland
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at the World Future Energy Summit

IF WE CAN DO IT, SO CAN OTHERS

Abu Dhabi, 21 January 2008¹

Your Highnesses, ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed a great honor for me to be invited to be among you here today. I want to begin by congratulating Abu Dhabi and Masdar for successfully bringing this Future Energy Summit together. It is interesting that small countries like Abu Dhabi and Iceland can play a vital leadership role in transforming the energy future of the world.

We have all, in recent years, seen the impact of climate change. We who come from the north where the ice is melting both on the Northern pole and in the glaciers in my country and in Greenland, don't really need any extensive lessons on how rapidly climate change is happening. We have also been extremely encouraged by how in the last year or even past few months we have seen a fundamental transformation of the global opinion in this respect, symbolized not only by the recent Nobel Peace Prize but also by the meetings of the G8 leaders and the recent conference in Bali.

I have often said that it is perhaps not fundamentally wise to call this debate `climate change` because in its essence it is all about the future of energy. Without a fundamental transformation of the energy systems in the world we are not going to be able to prevent the disastrous consequences for

¹ This is a transcript of the President's speech, which was delivered without written notes.

our own generation and the generations of our children and grandchildren. That is why this conference is so timely and important. Without bringing global leaders from the worlds of business and technology and government together, we will never be able to solve this problem.

Looking towards the energy future of the world, I often point out that there are two, fundamental, great resources of renewable, clean energy which we have not really begun to tap. One is above our heads, the energy of the Sun, and during this conference you will fortunately hear a lot about new technologies in this area. But the other is below our feet, inside the globe, because, in fact, as we all know from our school days but have not really grasped as a fundamental basis of our energy system in the future – we are all sitting and walking and sleeping on a huge fireball which is inside the Earth. And the fundamental question is: How can we harness this energy which is inside the Earth?

My country, Iceland, has been fortunate to take a global leadership in this area dependent on our technology and our businesses in the last few years. It began in the middle of the last century by municipalities and cities providing pipelines for hot water into the houses. But it has resulted in the fundamental transformation of the energy system of Iceland over the last 40-50 years from being during the early part of my life over 80% dependent on coal and oil, and now 100% of our electricity production is from clean, renewable energy resources and almost 80% of our total energy requirements are derived from clean energy.

Iceland is a fundamental proof that it is possible within the lifetime of one generation to transform the energy system of our countries. I don't accept that we are so special that only we can do it. And that is why I am so happy to cooperate with Abu Dhabi, because I think the symbolism of what Iceland and Abu Dhabi can do together, the country covered with ice in the north and the country in the sun and the desert here in the Gulf, is a strong political message to the rest of the world.

If you look around the globe, we see the enormous potential of geothermal resources in all continents, resources which have not at all been tapped or harnessed. The greatest task in the near future is now to harness these technologies in different parts of the world. Iceland has been devoting an increasing proportion of our business and technological and political effort creating such cooperations in different parts of the world: In Asia, in the Americas, in Europe and in Africa. We have been helped by the United

Nations Geothermal Training Programme which was established in my country thirty years ago and has enabled many countries in different parts of the world to build up a special field of scientists and technicians and engineers. Because without the army of scientist and engineers and technological people we will not succeed in this area. That is why the emphasis in the Masdar project of building up major centers of universities is so accurate.

Recently, or two years ago, we signed an agreement with China to build the largest urban geothermal heating system in the world in a major city in Shanxi province in China. Two years later I was fortunate to visit the city and the project which has led to the closing of the coal-driven power station in that city and the initiation of the first geothermal heating system in a Chinese city. The transformation that this will make in the coming years, not just in the energy system of China but also in reducing pollution and in the health care system is enormous. Similarly, we have been able in the last year during our discussions with many leaders in the US Congress, both in the Senate and the House, and in meetings with some of the leading presidential candidates which will face elections later this year, help to transform the energy system within the United States towards harnessing the geothermal potential of the US. And in Europe, especially in Germany — our Minister of Energy recently celebrated the beginning of an important geothermal project in Germany. Last year, my friend the President of Djibouti, who I am happy to share the podium with here today, came to Iceland. And I often say that if a President of an African country comes to Iceland in the middle of the winter, that shows the clear dedication to transform the energy system of his country. This has led to the formulation of an important cooperation between Djibouti and Iceland, a cooperation to transform the oil based energy system of Djibouti over to clean energy, geothermal based energy system – it could become a landmark in the clean energy future of East Africa. So, all over the world we are seeing important steps being taken, initiated and led by my small country – an interesting manifestation of what all of us can do.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that although we have achieved an enormous success in harnessing the fire inside the Earth, the technological progress is still continuing. There are three important areas where we can see a fundamental change taking place in the next few years.

First is the Deep Drilling Geothermal Project led by Iceland in cooperation with many partners from the United States. The purpose of this

project is to drill as far down as five kilometers into the Earth and harness the heat resources between 400 and 600 degrees C, which has not been done previously. The potential of such deep drilling all over the world, harnessing the very high temperature areas is, in fact, enormous.

The second area is the so called Kalina project in northern of Iceland which is based on using low temperature areas of around or below 100 degrees and advancing the energy potential of these areas in order to produce electricity just like in the high temperature areas. Therefore aluminum smelters and steel companies as well as entire cities can be driven by the electricity from geothermal sources.

Third is the ocean bottom. Because, my dear friends, as the continents are blessed by geothermal resources, so is the ocean bottom, due to the splitting of the Earth surface below the sea level. To bring the technologies which have been developed by the oil and gas industries in recent years in harnessing the oil from the ocean bottom into the harnessing of geothermal energy which lies below the ocean bottom all over the world, here in the Gulf area, in the Atlantic ocean and elsewhere, could transform dramatically the entire energy portfolio of the globe.

These three areas could all signify a fundamental technological breakthrough in the clean energy future of the world. It is necessary, as Prince Charles said in his opening speech here today, we only have 10 to 15 years to achieve this transformation. If we don't do it during that incredibly short time, the damage to the global system will be irreversible, and the future of our generation, and our children's generation will be a disaster.

By visiting my country and the neighboring Greenland you can witness how the glaciers are melting. But coming to Iceland you can also witness what can be done. Our country has, within the lifetime of one generation, completely transformed its energy system. So, my core message here today is simply this: If we can do it, so can others.

If Abu Dhabi and Iceland, two small countries in different parts of the world, and Djibouti in Africa, can take a leadership and show a vision in this area, so can everybody else. Time is short. Let us therefore begin this journey as soon as possible.