

**UNU Fisheries Training Programme  
Graduation Ceremony  
March 8, 2011**

**Address by Mr. Hermann Ingólfsson,  
Director General for International Development  
on behalf of the Minister for Foreign  
Affairs Mr. Össur Skarphéðinsson**

Dear UNU fellows, ladies and gentlemen.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the graduation of the UNU Fisheries Training Programme on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Össur Skarphéðinsson. The Minister had planned to join us here today, but he had to cancel due to other commitments. He sends his congratulations to the fellows on your graduation.

Dear fellows.

Harvesting the oceans and developing the potential of aquaculture is important for our planet. The world's marine fisheries are socially and economically vital, providing animal protein and supporting food security to over one billion people. FAO points out that in 2008 per capita supply of fish as human food reached an all time high. Employment opportunities in the fisheries sector are outpacing world population growth and employment in traditional agriculture. Furthermore, aquaculture is the fastest-growing animal food producing sector and now accounts for almost half of food fish supply.

This confirms that seen in a global perspective, fisheries and aquaculture are of key importance for development. However, the opportunities are far from being fully utilized. A recent World Bank study concludes that the potential annual increase in global net benefits from well managed marine capture fisheries is in the order of 50 billion US Dollars per year, which is a conservative estimate. The potential is probably significantly higher.

Despite these opportunities the international debate on fisheries is often influenced by negative sentiments and criticism. Overexploitation, depletion and irresponsible fisheries are commonly used words to describe the global situation. I want to state clearly that these problems should by no means be taken lightly, but it is important to present a fair and balanced view on what can be accomplished in terms of responsible and sustainable fisheries management.

We Icelanders know that fisheries reform is among the most challenging and complicated policy issues that any government embarks upon. Economic, ecological and social aspects have to be taken into consideration and scientific advice is of fundamental importance. We are fortunate to possess a wealth of experience in this field and to have excellent experts within our institutions, universities and in the business sector. The Fisheries Training Programme is an efficient tool to share this knowledge with the outside world. I want to use this opportunity to thank all of our partners for their contributions that help making the training programme a success.

Ladies and gentlemen.

The Fisheries Training Programme, together with the geothermal and land restoration programmes, is a significant pillar of Iceland's international cooperation. They are financed out of the Foreign Ministry's budget envelope, representing more than 10% of Iceland's overall development cooperation.

In mid-February the Minister for Foreign Affairs submitted to parliament a Strategy for Iceland's Development Cooperation for the next four years. This is the first time that a comprehensive strategy and plan of action for our development efforts is deliberated in parliament. The document presents a strong commitment by Iceland that we will do our utmost to support global efforts to advance economic and social development. The strategy highlights fisheries as a priority sector in our bilateral and multilateral work. Furthermore, the United Nations University is identified as one of our key international organisations, thus giving the training programmes a prominent role in the years to come.

The strategy also envisages that next year resources for development cooperation will gradually start increasing again. The last years have been challenging. Budgets have been cut, including to the Fisheries Training Programme. I am pleased to note that despite this, the level of activity remains high. I even understand that this year, the plan is to conduct at least seven short courses in the field, which is an increase from four courses last year.

A third element of our development strategy that I want to highlight is gender equality. The gender perspective is always high on the government's agenda, but today we give it even more attention since we are celebrating the International Women's Day. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the International Women's Day and the theme chosen by the United Nations for this year's campaign could not have been more appropriate for your work at the

UNU training programmes – namely on Equal Access to Education, Training and Science and Technology (Pathway to Decent Work for Women).

In our view women's empowerment is fundamental to our joint efforts to seek a more peaceful and prosperous world. We advocate strongly for this in relation to development cooperation, peace and security, and climate change. The new strategy enhances the focus on women's empowerment and identifies gender equality as a cross cutting issue for all our development cooperation. This emphasis will have implications for the UNU programmes because we will push the gender agenda in our bilateral, as well as, multilateral work.

We would of course have liked to see more than four women graduating in the group today. But we also know that since the programme was established more than one-third of all graduates have been women. This is positive, but we must do even better. Our target should clearly be an equal number of men and women, not only in the six months training, but also at the short courses and with the masters and PhD scholarships.

Emphasis on gender equality is, however, much more than head-counting. We should integrate and mainstream gender perspectives into all aspects of the programmes, including the curriculum. We therefore encourage the training programmes to bring this agenda forward by initiating work on specific gender action plans for their operations.

Dear fellows.

Graduation from the Fisheries Training Programme is now taking place for the thirteenth time. Seventeen fellows join the group of graduates today, bringing the total number of fellows that have completed the six months training to 223 fellows from 43 countries.

I congratulate you for completing your training and for your achievements during your stay here Iceland. Your knowledge and experience is now more valuable than ever before. Education is an investment, which generates important returns. Science is key to development. The expertise that you have acquired will hopefully help your countries make fisheries even more important in your economies. Fisheries generates income, increases employment opportunities and contributes to improved food security.

I also want to pay tribute to the excellent work done by the staff of the training programme. Tumi, Þór and Sigríður: You are the heart and soul of this programme and together with your

other colleagues here at the Marine Research Institute you have shown that dedication and hard work can produce marvellous results.

Dear fellows.

Let me conclude by congratulating you again on your graduation. I am confident that what you have learned during your time here will give you new and exciting possibilities in the future. I wish you a safe journey back home and hope that you look back on your stay here with fond memories.

I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Thank you.