



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

Technology has been the key to Icelandic success as we tamed in the twentieth century geothermal forces and harnessed rivers for energy and electricity production. Our country was within a single generation 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 Jule Verne who published in 1874 the famous book "Mysterious Island", describing a factious island in the southern seas and including a scenario for a future vision of a hydrogen economy. The idea that coal could be replaced by hydrogen was his brilliant contribution and now it has become Iceland's fate 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 Dr. Thorsteinn I. Sigfusson.

Shortly after moving to Iceland in the 1980s after concluding 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 Icelandic New Energy company 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 to be especially mentioned.

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 Reykjavik; this was a part of the now famous ECTOS project.

A dedicated team established within the project has influenced energy policies of many countries in different parts of the world, including the largest demonstration project ever built worldwide, 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 thermoelectricity for splitting water, and also started with his collaborators to use geothermal heat to compress hydrogen with the use of metal hydrides. A new technology of utilising geothermal energy with hydrogen was thus born and a number of innovative solutions were created. Iceland thus obtained a leading position in the field of hydrogen.

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 the 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 give the Global Energy International Award to Professor Dr. Thorsteinn Sigfusson. In this way Russia sends a strong signal to the international community and provides an important vision of the future.

Our two countries, Iceland and Russia, can together 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 Russia has by giving this splendid award to Professor Dr. Thorsteinn Sigfusson honoured a leader who can play a significant role in this cooperation.

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