

ICELAND

Innlegg umhverfissráðherra í pallborðsumræðum um aðlögun og sjálfbæra þróun
COP-10, Buenos Aires

Mr. Chairman,

We need to reduce the human impact on climate change, but we also need to **adapt**, as some climate change is inevitable, even if we succeed in reaching our mitigation goals.

Climate change models are complex, and it is difficult to know exactly how climate change may affect different countries and locations in the future. Building capacity and improving resilience to natural disasters and change in general - will also help societies to adapt to climate change. We should integrate adaptation to climate change into existing strategies and programmes aimed at sustainable development.

Each country and each community must take into account its specific situation and challenges in preparing for climate change. Still, adaptation does have a global aspect. Together, we must assist those who are the most vulnerable, including Small Island Developing States. We also need to assist those who lack the resources for effective adaptation. Meetings of parties to this convention can serve as useful venues for the sharing of experiences and best practices.

Mr. Chairman,

The Arctic Region is experiencing climate change at a faster rate than other parts of the world. The recently released Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, the first comprehensive Regional Assessment of Climate change since the agreement on the UNECCC, projects warming in the Arctic at about twice the rate of the global average. If current trends continue, we will see, among other things, a great reduction of sea ice in coming decades, and a shift in vegetation zones and animal habitats. These changes will affect the economic and social conditions of Arctic residents. ~~much~~ They ~~may~~ also provide important indications as to what may appear in the rest of the world in the future.

The Arctic Council, in its recent Reykjavik Declaration of Ministers, endorsed work within the Council aimed at helping Arctic residents to adapt to and manage the environmental, economic and social impacts of climate change. I am certain that the Arctic may hold lessons for other regions as regards adaptation strategies. We who live in the high north also have much to learn from others. Iceland welcomes the attention adaptation strategies have received here at COP-10, and supports continued work in this field.

Sigríður Anna Thórdardóttir, Minister for the Environment, Iceland
Intervention on technology and climate change, COP-10, Buenos Aires, 16. December 04

Mr. Chairman,

Technological developments are an important means of tackling climate change, not least in the field of energy. However, there are at present available clean technologies that can be used much more widely to combat climate change.

Geothermal energy is very competitive in many parts of the world. Although not found in every country, it is estimated that hundreds of millions of people could benefit from electricity and heat from geothermal resources. This is particularly true for many developing countries.

Despite the fact that geothermal is a well proven technology, it has not been applied as widely as it could be. A lack of know-how and training is one of the biggest obstacles. Iceland hosts the UN University's Geothermal Training Programme, the activities of are due to be expanded. Training programmes will be set up in Africa in 2005, and in Central America and Asia in 2006-2008. It is our hope that this will help speed up the use of climate-friendly energy in those regions.

The Icelandic government has decided to considerably increase Iceland's Official Development Assistance in the coming years. A substantial part of this increase will be channeled to supporting projects in renewable energy in Small Island Developing States.

Climate-friendly technologies in general face many obstacles. We must train engineers and build up capacity to build and run clean power plants. Iceland, with its abundant hydro and geothermal sources, used coal for energy in the early stages of its economic development. We now use renewable energy for about 99% of our stationary energy needs. We would like to assist others with similar circumstances to pass the polluted stage of development and embrace a cleaner future.

Another technology which could be of critical importance in reducing greenhouse gas emissions for the long-term is hydrogen technology. Hydrogen is part of Iceland's vision for tackling climate change. There are currently hydrogen-powered buses on the streets of Reykjavík, giving the public a glimpse of a cleaner future. We hope that our renewable resources can produce fuel for our cars and ships, so they will one day become emissions-free. But Iceland can not act by itself. We take part in international cooperation, including the International Partnership for the Hydrogen Economy, which we hope will bring a cleaner future a bit closer.