

Victor de Sola Award ceremony: Speech delivered by Ingimar G. Haraldsson on behalf of the United Nations University Geothermal Training Programme

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great acknowledgement that you have shown to the United Nations University Geothermal Training Programme by awarding us the Victor de Sola award, and all the more welcome because of the long-standing and close ties between LaGeo and our programme. Indeed the ties between Iceland and El Salvador go back to the 1960s when some of the senior geothermal specialists in Iceland were working as consultants for the United Nations in the early days of exploration and development of the Ahuachapán geothermal field. They came back to tell stories about a beautiful country and its people, in times when very few Icelanders had visited the countries of Central America – and had without a doubt an easy time capturing the imagination of their audience.

The first person from El Salvador to come for geothermal training at the Geothermal Division of Orkustofnun, the National Energy Authority of Iceland in the 1970s, was Gustavo Cuéllar. Later, in 1978, Gustavo came again to Iceland to attend an international Workshop on Training Needs in Geothermal Energy organized by the United Nations University and Orkustofnun. At this workshop, it was recommended that the UNU Geothermal Training Programme would be established in Iceland and that the Geothermal Institute would be established at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. There was therefore a Salvadoran presence at the very inception of the programme.

The first UNU Fellow from El Salvador, Mr. Luis Zuniga, came for training in the second year of the operations of the UNU-GTP, in 1980. In the 33 years since then, a total of 36 Salvadoran scientists and engineers have graduated from our 6 month training programme in all of the nine specialized study lines that we offer and 5 have graduated with an MSc degree from the University of Iceland on a UNU-GTP Fellowship – with the sixth having started his Master's studies in last August.

The Millennium Short Course series for the Latin America region started in 2006 with the Workshop for Decision Makers on Geothermal Projects in Central America and has been held almost annually since then, in cooperation with LaGeo. Participation was originally restricted to Central America and Mexico, but has since expanded to South America and the Caribbean. In addition to their educational value, the short courses have nurtured professional relationships and collaboration in the Latin America region, as well as serving as an entrance platform for studies in Iceland.

Through the years, we have had many excellent students from El Salvador at the UNU-GTP and we are very pleased to see how many of them have become actively engaged in geothermal education, most notably through the recently established Regional Geothermal Training Programme at the University of El Salvador. This programme allows the rich Salvadoran geothermal expertise to be shared within the region and creates new opportunities for Spanish speaking students interested in geothermal. We are honored that the UNU-GTP has been asked to play an advisory role for this programme.

The UNU-GTP team is very grateful for the acknowledgement that is bestowed upon us through the Victor de Sola award and I am privileged to represent all of us here today: Lúdvík, Tori, Markús, Frída and myself, as well as the great number of lecturers and supervisors who contribute to our training programme and make it what it is. I bring you all warm greetings from cold Iceland, and most notably from Director Lúdvík S. Georgsson who could not be here today, as he had been previously booked for another award ceremony in Norway: The Nordic Council Nature and Environment Prize 2013. It is my honor to be here in his place to accept this award on behalf of the UNU Geothermal Training Programme. I would also like to convey to you warmest wishes from Dr. Ingvar B. Fridleifsson who has recently stepped down as director of the UNU-GTP to enter retirement.

Thank you for your friendship through the years. May it grow and blossom for years to come.