

President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson



President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson (b. 1943) is the fifth President of the Republic of Iceland and was first elected as President in 1996. He took his B.A. degree in Economics and Political Science at the University of Manchester in 1965 where he also completed his Ph.D. thesis in political science five years later. He subsequently became the first Professor of Political Science at the University of Iceland. The President was elected to the Althingi, the legislative assembly in 1978 and served as Iceland's Minister of Finance 1988-1991.

President Grimsson has been active on international venues for a long time. He was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe from 1981-1984 and 1995-1996 and was Chairman and later President of the international organization Parliamentarians for Global Action from 1984 to 1990, serving on its council until 1996.

Among many international awards he has received is the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize which he received on behalf of PGA, and last year it was declared that he would receive the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding. He was a member of the committee of the Peace Initiative of Six Heads of State in the years 1984-1989.

In recent years the President has been very active in international dialog on renewable energy and climate change. He initiated together with Professor Jeffrey Sachs the Global Roundtable on Climate Change which met both at Columbia University and in Iceland and included representatives of nearly one hundred European and American corporations, as well as experts, scientist and opinion leaders. He has actively participated in the Clinton Global Initiative and has helped to further clean energy projects in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the United States. President Grimsson strongly advocates the use of geothermal energy, which is a renewable, economically viable and reliable resource, as proven convincingly by the case of Iceland.

In 2007 he was the patron and helped to organize the international forum on soils, society and global change, held to commemorate a century of organized soil conservation and land restoration in Iceland. He has participated in dialogs in different parts of the world on how the restoration of land quality can be used to battle climate change, advocating how the long-standing experience of Iceland in combating desertification and re-vegetating eroded land could be of use to other countries.

President Grimsson has for several years been a Board Member of the Special Olympics, and he played a major role in the international drug prevention campaign, Youth in Europe, which now enjoys the participation of 19 European cities. He has also been active in promoting cooperation between Icelandic and foreign universities, and has lectured at prominent American academic institutions, including Harvard University, Columbia University, Brown and The Ohio State University.

President Grimsson is married to Dorrit Moussaieff. He has two daughters from his marriage to Gudrun Katrin Thorbergsdottir who passed away in 1998.