

**Rector's opening address for the International conference on
earthquake engineering and structural dynamics (ICESD2017).**

Held in Bratti (Stakkahlíð), Tuesday 12 June at 8.30 a.m.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A very good morning to you all on this beautiful morning in Reykjavik. It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the University of Iceland, and it is an honour to open this International Conference on Earthquake Engineering and Structural Dynamics, ICESD2017.

The conference has been organized in honour of the late Professor Ragnar Sigbjörnsson. Professor Sigbjörnsson was a distinguished researcher and teacher in structural mechanics, engineering seismology, and earthquake engineering at the University of Iceland. This conference aims to bring together the latest developments in these fields. Eleven keynote lectures from distinguished researchers and numerous other talks will showcase the cutting edge in these fields of research.

As most of you know, Professor Ragnar Sigbjörnsson's research represented a very important contribution to knowledge in the fields of earthquake engineering, structural dynamics and engineering seismology and full justice will be done to his scientific career here at this conference. Although I am an engineer myself, I specialise in electrical and computer engineering, so I will not venture to comment in any detail on the subject of the conference. Instead I would like to use this

opportunity to say a few words of a more personal nature on Professor Ragnar Sigbjörnsson.

Professor Ragnar Sigbjörnsson was a leading engineering researcher and among the most prolific and hard-working scholars at the University of Iceland. His research in earthquake engineering, structural dynamics and engineering seismology attracted attention both domestically and internationally, and he was highly respected by the international scientific community. He received several international and domestic awards, including the Order of the Falcon award, presented by the President of Iceland. He authored and co-authored more than 350 research papers, including more than 115 papers that appeared in peer-reviewed international journals.

Ragnar Sigbjörnsson got his first degree in civil engineering from the University of Iceland in 1968, the masters and doctoral degrees from DTU in Lyngby, Denmark in 1971 and 1974, respectively and was with NTNU in Trondheim, Norway until he joined the University of Iceland in 1979. He was with the University of Iceland until his retirement in 2014. He became full Professor of Civil Engineering in 1990. In the early stages of his career at the University, he established the Mechanics Research Centre under the University of Iceland Engineering Research Institute, serving as director of the Centre until 2000. That year the Mechanics Research Centre became the University of Iceland Earthquake Engineering Research Centre in Árborg, South Iceland. Ragnar became director of the new Centre, a position he held until he retired in 2014. Ragnar was also director of the University of Iceland Engineering

Research Institute from 1983 to 1990, a period of significant growth and development for the Institute. He was unquestionably among the pioneers in engineering research at the University of Iceland and a role model for younger researchers, laying the ground for strong engineering research at the University.

I remember Ragnar as a wonderful teacher and colleague. He taught both undergraduate and graduate students in environmental and civil engineering and supervised numerous doctoral students. I was his student in the spring of 1982, in a course on structural engineering for electrical engineering students. He was an excellent teacher. Ragnar's lectures were always both enlightening and engaging. When I started working at the Engineering Research Institute in 1984 and later when I joined the Faculty of Engineering after obtaining my PhD in 1991, I experienced first-hand Ragnar's driving ambition to improve the Engineering Research Institute, engineering studies and engineering research at the University of Iceland.

Ragnar Sigbjörnsson's work left a strong foot-print at the University of Iceland. Under his leadership engineering research at the University was strengthened considerably. The University of Iceland and Icelandic society are now reaping the benefits of this important groundwork.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me not delay you from the excellent programme ahead. I sincerely hope that you experience an enjoyable stay in Iceland, scientifically,

culturally and socially, and that you will return home with fond memories.

I hereby declare the 2017 International conference on earthquake engineering and structural dynamics open.

Thank you.