

**Address by Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of  
Iceland, at the PAME meeting (Protection of the Arctic  
Marine Environment), held at the University of Iceland 10-  
12 September. Held at Litla-Torg, Tuesday 10 September  
2019, 9 am.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear members of the working group for the protection of the Arctic marine environment - PAME. It is my honour and pleasure to address you here today and particularly gratifying that this meeting is held here at the University of Iceland.

Let me start by telling you a little bit about the University of Iceland. It was founded in 1911 and is therefore beginning its 108th year. The University of Iceland is at once an Icelandic and international university, a leading academic institution in Iceland as well as part of the international scientific community. There are currently around 13,000 students enrolled at the University at all levels of higher education – undergraduates, Master's students and PhD students – including around 1,400 international students hailing from almost 90 different countries. The University has focused very much on research during the last three decades and PhD education during the last 10 years or so. This year almost 100 PhDs will graduate from the

University, which is a record. The University of Iceland has been ranked by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings and Shanghai Rankings for a number of years and in particular strong fields at the University of Iceland, which are important for arctic research, have been ranked in the top 100, including remote sensing and geosciences.

Dear guests, as we all know issues affecting the Arctic region have been attracting increased attention globally. This has a lot to do with the fact that the effects of climate change are felt more dramatically in the Arctic than in many other places on earth. What happens to the environment in the Arctic has a great impact on us here in Iceland, so it is important that we are very aware of these developments.

I gather, PAME's main role is to address policies related to the conservation and sustainable use of the Arctic environment. Here at the University extensive research is conducted into Arctic affairs, including research on geosciences, environmental and natural resource management, life sciences and engineering. Since 2013 a special Centre for Arctic Policy Studies has operated at the University, dedicated to research on the Arctic and Arctic related issues. The Centre is a forum for interdisciplinary collaboration in the field of Arctic research. The main goal of the Centre is to support research both on a national and international level and to increase cooperation

between academia and both the public and private sectors. This school year there is a lecture series under the auspices of the Arctic Policy Centre, presenting and introducing the public to the many fields of Arctic studies at the University.

On your agenda this morning is a talk by one of our professors Ingibjörg Jónsdóttir, who will present a talk on sea ice. Dr. Jónsdóttir was the first speaker of the aforementioned lecture series.

Ladies and gentlemen. An exciting programme is in store, with a diverse series of talks by outstanding experts, and I wish you all an enjoyable and productive meeting over the next few days. I am aware that the last day of the meeting will take place in Viðey, a little island here just outside Reykjavík, which ought to give you an opportunity to look up from your work and see a little bit of the natural beauty of Iceland.

Thank you.