

# AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

## Press release

### Aga Khan honoured at Nui Maynooth



**Maynooth, Ireland, 30 June 2008** - His Highness the Aga Khan today received an honorary law doctorate from National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He was cited for “outstanding contributions to the elimination of global poverty, the advancement of women, the promotion of Islamic culture and the furthering of pluralistic values in society”. The Aga Khan received his honorary doctorate from the President of NUI Maynooth, Professor John Hughes.

Speaking at the conferral NUI Maynooth President, Professor John Hughes said “Today the college is honouring an individual who has made a significant positive impact in the developing world. He has championed religious pluralism as a way of building a common understanding among people throughout the globe. We in Ireland readily identify with this view given that it brought peace to this island. This University is very proud to honour the Aga Khan and to recognise his great achievements”.

His Highness the Aga Khan became Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims on July 11, 1957 at the age of 20, succeeding his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan. He is the 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims. Today, the Ismailis live in some 25 countries, mainly in West and Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East, as well as in North America and Western Europe.

The Aga Khan has dedicated his life to addressing serious issues in the developing world. He is the founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), one of the largest private development groups in the world. AKDN is made up of a group of institutions working to improve living conditions and opportunities in specific regions of the developing world. Their individual mandates range from architecture, education and health to the promotion of private sector enterprise, the enhancement of non-government organisations and rural development.

NUI Maynooth, which offers a course in Equine Business, is keenly aware of the close ties that the Aga Khan has with both Ireland and the local Kildare community. He has played a very significant role in this country through his involvement in the Irish horse racing industry. He owns a number of stud farms across the country. The Aga Khan took over the studs from the estate of his father Prince Aly Khan, his inheritance included six farms in Ireland: Sheshoon, Ballymany, Ongar, Gilltown, Sallymount and Williamstown.

Sheshoon Stud in Kildare with the incorporation of Brownstown, is the oldest continuously operative stud in Ireland or England and was the first Irish farm purchased by the late Aga Khan. Today Gilltown, Sallymount and Sheshoon are nature sanctuaries with a great variety of wildlife, flowers and rare mature trees.

“His Highness is the first member of the Islamic community to be so honoured in the history of NUI Maynooth and it is particularly fitting that this University should honour him at this time, steeped as it is in the history of Catholicism in Ireland, but now a vibrant multicultural and multi-denominational university. For the Aga Khan embodies the spirit of understanding, tolerance and ecumenism that should link the great religions of the world” added Prof. Hughes.

National University of Ireland, Maynooth is Ireland’s fastest growing university with about 9,000 students including 1,000 postgraduate students across 300 programmes. In 2008 the University has seen a 14% rise in its CAO first preferences – the highest of any institution in the country.

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