

**Speech as Chair of the Closing Plenary Session “Paving the Way to the Future”
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Introductory Remarks

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my great honor and privilege to chair this closing plenary session of the Third Annual Meeting of the STS forum, entitled “Paving the way for the future.”

It is of the utmost importance for all of us here today to pave the way for the future. But how can we do so? We have four distinguished speakers with us today to help us answer this question.

How can we ensure science and technology are utilized in the best interest of mankind, and to develop, rather than destroy, the world five, fifty, or even one hundred years from now?

Let us start by looking at this task from the angle of “what do we want the world to look like in 50 years?”

Well, we want to see a healthier, better and safer world. We want to utilize science and technology to:

- combat poverty
- combat global warming
- combat inequalities between different regions
- combat terrorism
- combat deadly diseases

We simply want to create a future world built on human freedom and dignity.

A key to our task today lies in the young people. The children of the world are the key to success, but they can also be the burden of failure.

As professor Martin Rees, President of the Royal Society in the UK, said the first night we gathered for dinner in this beautiful place, “There is something wrong with all of us here....We are too old.”

And what he meant, and what I believe is extremely important, is this: The young people, our students, they are the future! We have to invest in the future.

As a president of a university, one of my favorite and most rewarding tasks is to interact and meet with students. I was once sitting in a classroom with 10 students and we were discussing the future and whether or not I would advise them to go into research. And my answer to them was, “If you feel passionate about coming up with new ideas, coming up with new ways of

thinking – you should go into science.” It is important to get the smartest young people into science and technology, but they have to do it for the right reasons.

Another key to success is to utilize all our resources, all of our brains in the most optimal way. Today, we do not always do that. Sometimes we are only utilizing 50% of our full potential. In many laboratories, at many board meetings and in many decision-making processes in science around the world, women are simply not present. I would even say that we have failed here at the STS forum to put enough bright women among the speakers. This is something we have to correct in the coming years. If we want to accomplish all our goals for the future, we have to start supporting young women and make sure they participate at all levels.

A third key to success is communication. I had a colleague who once who said to me: “Scientists who cannot describe what they do to their grandmother or their children should not be doing science.”

Of course this is an exaggeration. However, it is essential that we, who are scientists, can explain what we are doing, why we are doing it and how society can benefit from what we are doing. Because if we cannot do this, how can we expect other people, politicians, industry and media to understand and support us?

Now, before introducing my fellow colleagues in this session, I would like to summarize the three main points I have made:

1. The future is the young people.
2. We need to promote and support women in science, otherwise we will miss 50% of the talent.
3. Communication is the key to building bridges between people, nations, cultures, political systems and religious systems.

It is my firm believe that we, who represent the scientific community, have a responsibility toward society to utilize our knowledge and our resources in such a way that we can build a healthier, better and safer world. But we cannot accomplish this alone, we need the support of society and we need the support of our politicians.

Concluding Remarks

Now ladies and gentleman it is time to conclude. First of all, I would like to thank the four speakers for their excellent contributions. We have had three extremely busy, productive and exciting days in the beautiful city of Kyoto, the heart of Japan.

We all feel content and full of enthusiasm and energy. The meeting has been a great success in terms of “paving the way for the future”.

But before you leave here, I want to remind all of you to bring with you all of what has been said here in Kyoto. Do not forget the discussions and the bright ideas now when you return to a desk full of work and a calendar busier than ever. Do not just think about the big challenges and the big questions once a year, when we meet here in Kyoto! Go home, and get started now, because tomorrow it might be too late.

I would like to emphasize one common theme from all our discussions, and that is the young generation, the people who are going to sit here 20, 30, 40 years from now. We need to get the young people to be interested in, to understand and to take on the challenges of the “Lights and shadows of science and technology” for the future.

And last but not least, I would like to extend our warmest thanks to Mr. Omi and his staff for arranging an outstanding meeting, which has set the stage for action. So would you please join me in a big hand for Mr. Omi and all the people involved in this meeting.

This concludes the 2006 STS forum. Thank you for coming and have a safe trip home.