

Opening Ceremony Speech at the 4th Annual Meeting of the STS *Forum*

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Prime Minister Fukuda, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As chairman of the Science and Technology in Society *forum*, I am greatly honored to hereby declare our fourth annual meeting open. We have in attendance over 600 figures in different fields, including 30 (P) ministers in charge of science and technology, from more than 70 countries and regions.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to the sponsors, various organizations and their staffs that have made it possible to hold this forum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In recent years, science and technology has progressed very rapidly and brought tremendous benefits to our daily lives. On the other hand, advances in S & T have brought about problems such as global warming, ethical concerns in bio-sciences and information security issues in ICT. These are the so-called “lights and shadows of science and technology.”

At the same time, progress in science and technology is strongly influencing business, culture and society. Therefore, S & T is not an issue for scientists and engineers alone; everyone, including policymakers, business leaders and media leaders, should think of it as their own problem. These problems related to S & T cannot be solved by one or two countries alone; international cooperation and system harmonization are essential. We should discuss the common issues together at the global level.

Reflecting this situation, I believe the STS Forum is the place for people of different backgrounds from all over the world to gather and discuss how to deal with science and technology from the viewpoint of the future of humankind.

The STS *forum* has met three times since we established it in 2004, and I am very happy to see our discussions gradually shaping international opinion. With respect to global warming, we discussed the necessity of creating a post-Kyoto Protocol framework that all nations would participate in. The international community is now moving toward that direction. On the intellectual property rights issue, there is a movement toward creating an internationally harmonized system. We also talked about the importance of supporting developing countries not only financially but also through joint research programs in science and technology, an idea that is becoming more widely recognized.

This forum is not a gathering where professional scientists lecture to convey their knowledge to an audience. It is an opportunity for participants to frankly discuss S & T issues in relation to the future of humankind as individuals rather than as representatives of an organization or a nation. It is a platform for us to try to seek a common direction, and an opportunity to deepen our human network.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The main themes of the *STS forum* this year are “harmony with nature,” and “innovation.”

As a result of progress in science and technology, some believe that humankind can control nature. But the reality is that humankind is part of nature. To ensure our survival forever on this planet, we must live in harmony with nature.

Innovation is about using S & T to create new social and economic values. This is why we chose innovation as an important theme for this year’s forum.

In addition, and following up on previous years’ discussions, this Fourth Annual Meeting will be treating other important themes, such as infectious diseases, collaboration between academia and business, and new frontiers in science and technology, including nanotechnology or ICT.

I said earlier that the development of science and technology has brought lights and shadows. But at the same time, there is no doubt that science and technology is also one of the keys to resolving problems brought about by science and technology.

Let us be ambitious about finding ways to create a prosperous, secure, and sustainable future for humankind.

Thank you.