

**Speech at Plenary Session “Summaries from Concurrent Sessions”  
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**Summary of discussions at F Track**

Dr Richard Ernst set the tone for this F track when he spoke of the dangers of extreme specialization which include disenfranchising the public and discouraging students from pursuing natural sciences.

Trans-disciplinary dialogue, he felt, would lead to scientists being able to better relate to other experts, politicians, industrial managers and media.

**F1 – “Engaging Policy Makers in Scientific and Technological Issues”**

- Policy makers needed sound Science & Technology advice to base their policy decisions but were often not taking action due to justified disagreements within the scientific community. More needs to be done to present scientific views credibly to policy makers in a timely manner.
- One of critical disconnect was the different time-frames involved in solving policy issues such as climate change which required time horizons of 50 years versus the 4 years political terms of politicians.
- Beyond just policy makers, it was felt that the general public also needed to be engaged over the period for longer term decisions (beyond political terms) to be successfully implemented. Chairman Koji Omi noted that the current average constituent would not be interested in Science & Technology issues and it was an important driving factor for behavior.
- It was also noted that policy makers tend to view security and economic issues as being more important than that of environment. Science alone would not be able to solve environment problems as there were social and economic implications.

**F2 – “Interface and Dialogue between Humanities and Natural Sciences”**

- Everyone agreed that it was important for trans-disciplinary dialogue between humanities and natural sciences; in addition, the dialogue within the natural sciences was also felt to be critical for further science and inquiry.
- Social sciences (e.g. behavioral sciences) were seen as critical components in the total solution required in solving difficult issues of the day such as climate change.

- A notable comment from Dr Ernst was that while natural scientists were often interested and had good understanding of humanities, the reverse was not the case.
- The key, but most challenging, solution seemed to be fundamental changes in the Education system both at the bachelor and post-graduate level towards a T-model type of education which is at once deep in one specific area, but also broad based.

### **F3 – “Critical Science and Technology Agendas for the Media”**

- Everyone agreed that there should be more communication between Science & Technology community and the general public through media. It was also suggested that the fundamental decline in popularity and influence of science was something that needed to be addressed.
- While not ‘cheerleaders’ for science, it was felt that traditional media had great influence on general perception of science and played an important role in presenting a balanced critical view.
- One key suggestion was to increase the amount of communication by scientists and training for this area was identified as a possible action item.
- In addition, with the prevalence of internet and blogs, there were now increasing avenues for scientists to directly communicate with the public. Scientists should actively reach out and educate the public.