

“Science and Technology and the Future of Humankind”

Good morning, my name is Kazuo Furukawa from Hitachi, Ltd. It is a great honor for me to be able to address this distinguished gathering as one of the speakers of the opening plenary session of the 5th Annual Meeting of the Science and Technology Forum. The theme of this session, “Science and Technology and the Future of Humankind” is too grand a theme for someone like myself from the private economic sector to speak on, but in this day and age where a global financial crisis is threatening the world, at no other time in history has such a theme been of such importance to the world’s industrial sector.

I’d like to use Hitachi to illustrate my point. Hitachi, founded in 1910, will reach the centennial anniversary of its foundation in 2 years time, in 2010. Shortly before and after 1910, the Theory of Relativity and Quantum Mechanics, which have become the foundations of science in the 20th century, were successively proposed. The 20th century was indeed a century of industry lead by science. Science had its positive and negative impacts, but clearly it was due to developments in Science that we have our current industries in energy, transportation, information, medicine, biotechnology, materials, etc. Eight years have now passed since we moved into the 21st century, but have new theories which will support industry in this century been born yet? And, what sort of new industries can we expect to produce in the future?

I believe that the key word for future industries is again, “human”.

Yes, “human”. A century of human affluence. The various global issues such as global warming, availability of resources, energy, food and water, which have successively appeared and threaten this world’s sustainability, cannot be ignored. Further, the recent explosive developments in globalization have caused drastic changes in the flow of information, people, and money. Work- and life-styles are also undergoing major changes. In order to achieve a “century of human affluence” in the 21st century, it is important that the world’s industries strive to preserve Earth’s environment, and achieve a comfortable information society, and a life-long healthy society. That is, a society where industry and consumer appliances are gentle on humans.

Let me take the Electronics industry, which I am involved in, as an example, to envision industries for this “human century”.

- Innovative clean energy in harmony with Earth’s environment;
- Information devices with no age barrier or devices which can “read” peoples’ feelings;
- Stress-free, accident-free driving or operation of industrial and transport systems,
- Security-assured human-error free information systems, etc.

And, the key, I believe, to achieving such industries is “fusion”.

*2008/10/4(Saturday) 10:30-11:30 7 minute speech by
Mr. FURUKAWA Kazuo, President & CEO, Hitachi, Ltd.
at the 5th Annual Meeting of the Science & Technology Forum
Kyoto International Conference Center*

“Fusion of Knowledge” by universities, industries and research institutions, are some examples which come immediately to mind. And for these achievements to benefit society and develop into innovations, I believe that a “fusion of society’s needs and its citizens’ needs” in adopting these technological innovations, and even further still, a “fusion between policies and regulatory and systemic reforms” on a global scale to lead this process, are important.

Within Japanese industry, Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) announced in August this year, its commitment to various initiatives, such as “resource, energy, food and water problems”, “achievement of a low carbon society,” and “promotion of innovation” in a statement entitled “Resolution by industry to solving various global issues”. Last December, Hitachi also proposed environmental initiatives. Summarized under Hitachi’s “Environmental Vision 2025”, we made two promises: firstly, that by 2025, to contribute to a 100 million ton reduction in CO₂ emission through Hitachi products. The second promise and challenge is to transform all Hitachi Group products into Eco Products by 2025. The milestone target for 2010 is 50%.As you can see, Japanese industry has commenced in their challenge to overcoming the various global issues.

2010, as I have mentioned, marks Hitachi’s centennial. It is also the final year of the 3rd Basic Plan for Science and Technology in Japan, and if we turn our eyes to history, it is also the 1300th year anniversary of relocating Japan’s capital to Nara Heijo-kyo. We in industry firmly understand the challenges facing us, and the importance of solving the global issues of today. At the same time, we will endeavor to look 100 years, no, in 1,000 year terms to the future and ensure a lasting contribution to the future of humankind.

Thank you for your attention.