

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

The 23rd Global Annual Meeting of the Science and Technology in Society forum took place from October 4 to 6, 2026 in Kyoto, bringing together more than 1,600 leaders in science and technology, policymaking, business, and civil society from over 80 countries, regions, and international organizations.

1. The world today is facing profound and interconnected challenges. While armed conflicts and geopolitical tensions continue to threaten peace and stability, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies are raising fundamental questions about human values, responsibility, and the ethical use of technology. Global environmental challenges are also placing growing pressure on societies and ecosystems and require collective action beyond national borders. In this context, the responsibility of leaders to ensure that power—whether political, economic, or technological—is exercised within ethical principles has become ever more important. The STS forum provides a unique platform for dialogue and reflection, and for reaffirming our shared commitment to a just, peaceful, and humane future.

Trust & Cooperation

2. Science is essential to addressing interconnected global challenges, including public health, climate change, and food and water security. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath exposed a crisis of trust in science and scientific institutions. We recognize that trust cannot be taken for granted; it must be earned and sustained through openness, transparency, and meaningful engagement with diverse communities. Building trust also requires a better understanding of how science works, including its inherent uncertainty, trial and error, and ability to evolve with new evidence. Strengthening public trust in science is essential to ensuring that scientific knowledge can effectively contribute to addressing global challenges and improving the well-being of society and attracting a broader range of support.
3. Geopolitical tensions and rapid technological advances are reshaping the environment for international scientific cooperation, placing science diplomacy at a critical juncture. Strategic competition and scientific cooperation need not be mutually exclusive. Durable institutions, common standards, trusted relationships, and partnerships among governments, universities, industry, and other stakeholders can help sustain cooperation while addressing legitimate security concerns. University-to-university partnerships and the circulation of researchers can provide trusted and enduring channels for collaboration. In the age of AI and data, deeper partnership with the Global South is essential to ensure diverse technological choices and address shared global challenges. Sustaining science and innovation as a force for the public good will require practical cooperation and trusted relationships across borders.
4. Digital technologies have become essential to modern economies and societies, making secure access to computing infrastructure, data, software, and AI increasingly important. Recent disruptions, geopolitical shifts, and regional conflicts have exposed vulnerabilities in digital systems and highlighted the importance of digital sovereignty and resilience. We can no longer address these challenges one by one, as partial optimization may lead to failure. We need a holistic design that brings technologies, institutions, markets, and human values into a coherent system. Generative AI can accelerate this process by linking knowledge across domains, but AI alone cannot design society. That responsibility remains with us.

Governance & Transformation

5. Science and technology are advancing at an unprecedented pace, while the institutions and social systems that govern their development and use often evolve much more slowly. Fundamental research and emerging technologies require sustained investment and long-term perspectives, while their social, economic, ethical, and environmental impacts may unfold over decades. We recognize the need for institutions and policies that can bridge these different time horizons, enabling societies to anticipate both the opportunities and risks of transformative technologies. Long-term perspectives, continuity in research and innovation, and the participation of diverse societal voices are essential to ensuring that scientific and technological progress remains aligned with the needs of society and future generations.
6. Artificial intelligence has moved beyond being simply another technology. It is becoming a widely adopted capability that is transforming scientific discovery, industrial innovation, national competitiveness, and the way societies make decisions. While AI offers extraordinary opportunities to advance human prosperity, it also creates new risks involving safety, security, misinformation, inequality, concentration of power, and human agency. We recognize that innovation and responsible governance must advance together. As AI becomes increasingly autonomous and integrated into critical infrastructure, accountability and international cooperation are essential. Ensuring that trustworthy AI strengthens human prosperity, security, freedom, and the well-being of future generations will require continued cooperation among governments, industry, and the scientific community.

7. Artificial intelligence is transforming education and research, creating unprecedented opportunities to enhance learning, accelerate scientific discovery, and expand access to knowledge. At the same time, inappropriate or unchecked use of AI can undermine critical thinking, creativity, academic integrity, and trust in scientific knowledge. We recognize that education and research must evolve alongside AI, enabling students and researchers to use these technologies responsibly while preserving the essential role of human judgment, curiosity, creativity, and scientific skepticism. Ensuring that AI advances education and science in ways that are trustworthy, inclusive, and beneficial to society will require investment in AI literacy, research infrastructure, and responsible governance, as well as continued international cooperation.

Innovation for Humanity

8. Breakthroughs in research and innovation increasingly depend on collaboration that transcends scientific disciplines and the boundaries between academia, industry, government, and civil society. Rapid advances across emerging fields are creating unprecedented opportunities while also presenting complex global challenges that no single sector or nation can address alone. We recognize the need for open and trusted environments that encourage pre-competitive collaboration, connect diverse expertise, and create incentives for system-wide approaches to research and innovation. Research security is also essential to sustaining trust and responsible international collaboration. Greater international alignment on proportionate, transparent, and fair research security practices can strengthen the global research ecosystem while enabling reciprocal cooperation and accelerating the translation of knowledge into solutions that benefit society and future generations.
9. Quantum technologies are emerging as a new technological frontier with the potential to transform science, industry, government, and society. Quantum computing, sensing, communications, and other applications may enable breakthroughs in complex scientific and industrial challenges, while also creating new risks, including threats to existing cryptographic systems and cybersecurity. We recognize that realizing the potential of quantum technologies will require advances in capabilities, reliability, error correction, supporting technologies, and supply chains, as well as greater investment and broader access. Combining quantum technologies with AI may create additional opportunities for scientific and technological innovation. Building a robust quantum ecosystem will require collaboration among governments, industry, academia, and international partners.
10. Advances in neuroscience, neurotechnology, and artificial intelligence are opening new possibilities to augment human cognition and enhance the independence and inclusion of people with disabilities. Brain-computer interfaces, brain stimulation, AI-assisted cognition, and assistive technologies may improve learning, communication, decision-making, and participation in society. These technologies also raise fundamental questions concerning safety, privacy, autonomy, identity, fairness, and access. We recognize the need for responsible development that places human values and the perspectives of users, including people with disabilities, at its center. Ensuring that human augmentation technologies are safe, inclusive, and accessible will require collaboration across science, medicine, engineering, industry, government, and society, as well as international cooperation.
11. Advances in biotechnology, regenerative medicine, biomedical measurement, and artificial intelligence are transforming medicine from treating disease after its onset toward predicting, preventing, and precisely treating disease, while restoring damaged cells, tissues, and organs. These technologies offer the potential to extend healthy lives and reduce the burden of disease, but their development also raises challenges in safety, ethics, regulation, affordability, and equitable access. We recognize the need to integrate scientific innovation with responsible governance and patient-centered approaches. Ensuring that the benefits of personalized and regenerative medicine are safe, effective, affordable, and accessible will require collaboration among science, healthcare, industry, policymakers, and society.

Sustainable Future

12. A sustainable future requires not only deep decarbonization but also resilience, affordability, and reliable access to energy. Electrification, supported by diverse low-carbon sources, storage, and smart grids, offers a promising pathway, while hydrogen and synthetic fuels remain important for hard-to-abate sectors. Nuclear fusion may provide an additional long-term option, although significant scientific, technological, and regulatory challenges remain. Other breakthroughs are also very promising, notably the metal organic-frameworks (MOFs), which could play a major role in carbon capture and generating water from the air. We recognize the need to accelerate innovation across these complementary technologies while strengthening energy systems against climate extremes and other disruptions. Achieving a resilient, low-carbon energy future will require sustained investment, enabling policies, technological diversity, and international cooperation across countries, industries, and research communities.
13. The stability and resilience of the Earth system underpin human prosperity, yet our current economic system continues to place growing pressure on climate, biodiversity, water, and other natural resources. Scientific knowledge alone has not been sufficient to change this trajectory. We recognize the need to better integrate science into policy-making and to reform economic incentives so that natural and social capital, as well as environmental externalities, are properly valued. Mobilizing finance, advancing circular and low-carbon technologies, and strengthening international cooperation are essential to this transformation. A just transition must also address disparities between the Global North and South, enabling vulnerable communities to build resilience and pursue sustainable development.

Our explorations of these and other issues are far from over. We will continue our interactions and discussions to accompany the evolving lights and shadows of science and technology in the world. We look forward to convening again next year in Kyoto and have agreed to hold the 24th Annual Meeting of the STS forum from Sunday, October 3 to Tuesday, October 5, 2027.