The 18th ANNUAL MEETING
October 2, 3, 4 and 5, 2021    Kyoto, Japan

STSh forum
Science and Technology in Society forum
2021
Live Online

Screenshots from the 17th Annual Meeting (October 2020)
Note: Countries that appear after each individual’s title represent either their own nationality or the headquarter location of the organization they are affiliated with.
As a species, humankind has flourished, developed civilizations and improved living standards. Throughout the long history of humankind, progress was slow, but change came with the Industrial Revolution. The pace of change speeded up, particularly in the 20th century, and has continued to do so.

For example, humans are living longer. In the past, most human lives were short; even at the beginning of the last century, the average lifespan was 31 years. Nowadays, life expectancy has expanded to 73 years and continues to grow. Long life, which our ancestors could only dream of, has become a reality and proof of civilization’s success.

Meanwhile, ever-increasing human activity has brought great changes to planet Earth, and economic growth consuming its finite resources has deepened inequality. While it is undoubtedly true that changes to planet Earth, and economic growth consuming its finite resources has deepened inequality. While it is undoubtedly true that changes to planet Earth, and economic growth consuming its finite resources has deepened inequality. While it is undoubtedly true that changes to planet Earth, and economic growth consuming its finite resources has deepened inequality.

As my thoughts turn toward the future of science and technology and activities of the STS forum, I also look forward to introducing more topics for discussion, from energy, circular society and communications to artificial intelligence and medicine, to help us develop a vision for 2050. In discussing the 100- to 500-year long-term vision for humanity in the STS forum, I believe that 2050, or even as early as 2030, will be turning points.

We must also develop a vision for education. In days past, when humanity’s progress was slower, the future that young people were likely to see was not much different from what their elders had experienced. That is why the method of the old teaching the young worked well. But today, when science, technology and society are all changing so rapidly, we need to continue learning throughout our lives. This means that lifelong mutual active learning in inclusive societies where people from all walks of life confront social issues together must be at the heart of capacity building. I believe that the STS forum can spearhead this movement.

Population issues are another area where a vision is needed. In some areas of the world, high birth rates and high infant and child mortality are still common, whereas elsewhere average birth rates continue to fall. Current birth rates in half the countries and regions of the world are already insufficient to maintain existing population levels. Consequently, overcoming low birth rates is likely to become an issue for this century.

The STS forum’s greatest asset is its human network, which goes beyond national boundaries and academic disciplines. To further this asset, we will do our best to continue improving the age and gender balance of participants. In addition, we hope to go beyond our existing circle of friends to include figures prominent in art and literature. I look forward to the insights and creativity that artists and writers can bring to our endeavors.

For the sake of a bright future, we must bring the discussions and activities of the STS forum to fruition. The best way to control the shadows of science and technology is to create a society that strengthens their lights. This, I am certain, humankind can accomplish.

As my thoughts turn toward the future of science and technology and of civilization, this message expresses my hopes and my vision as the new chairman of the STS forum.

Hiroshi Komiyama
Chairman
STS forum

A Unique Forum

What Is the STS forum?
The STS forum is a registered non-profit organization led by Hiroshi Komiyama, Chairman, with former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as its Honorary Chairman. The forum is also guided by a Board and a Council composed of leaders from around the world.

Close to 1,500 participants from 120 countries, regions and international organizations engage in lively discussions for three or four days in early October every year at the Kyoto International Conference Center in Kyoto, Japan or online. Participation in the STS forum is by invitation only.

Why Attend?
To connect with like-minded people who wish to change the world for the better and who can address the problems we face from a broad range of perspectives.

You will have the rare opportunity to network with diverse groups of global leaders, including heads of academic institutions, leading corporate executives and top government officials.

Taking part in many networking meetings and smaller thematic sessions, where you can engage in open and informal discussions with participants from diverse backgrounds and scope of expertise, you gain fresh insights and novel perspectives on the key science and technology issues of our times and explore innovative ideas and initiatives together.

Who Will You Meet?
In 2020, the number of participants at the STS forum 17th Annual Meeting held online grew to nearly 1,500 from 100 countries and regions and 20 international organizations. Participants were a well-balanced mix of representatives from academia, industry and government.

Chairman’s Vision
Post-Session Networking

This year, we will have “post-session networking time,” allowing participants to have informal exchanges with each of the speakers for about 30 minutes after the end of any given session. We hope this will improve the environment for interaction in a rather comfortable setting, although this would not totally replace the fluidity of networking onsite.

Peer Meetings

Peer meetings are also an excellent opportunity for deepening and widening networks within participants’ own areas of activities. For 2021, we will be organizing most of the peer meetings which have taken place so far, such as for Science, Technology and Research Ministers (including Higher Education and Innovation), Funding Agency Presidents, Research Institute leaders, Academy of Science Presidents, Academy of Engineering (Technology) Presidents, and Young Leaders.

Regional Action on Climate Change, an adjunct session to the Annual Meeting now preparing for its 13th edition this year, is gaining further traction from around the world.

Young Leaders’ Program

The forum also invites selected young participants 40 or younger to participate in our annual meeting, in an effort to nurture future leaders with diverse perspectives for the next generation and beyond. Participants in this program have the opportunity to join a special “Dialogue between Young Leaders and Nobel Laureates” session. The STS forum is planning to offer this program virtually at our 2021 18th Annual Meeting.

Attractive Web-based Networking Opportunities

As we plan ahead for our 18th Annual Meeting (2021) via a web-based live online format for the second consecutive year, we were made increasingly aware of the lost opportunity for informal networking. This is one of the strengths of the STS forum when the annual meeting takes place face-to-face, and we are planning to alleviate this shortcoming.

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In 2020, our 17th Annual Meeting, a virtual meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, took place from October 3 to 6, 2020 live online from a base studio in the Kyoto International Conference Center, Kyoto, Japan, with the virtual participation of nearly 1,500 participants from 100 countries and regions and 20 international organizations.

A total of 113 speakers from 37 countries, regions and international organizations participated in 15 plenary-style sessions over four days. In 2020, there were no concurrent sessions, which take place in an in-person setting. Speakers had pre-recorded their remarks, and the session chairs guided live discussions based on remarks made available to participants in advance. There also were Q&A sessions.

The overarching theme of this annual meeting was “The Role of Science and Technology in the Post COVID-19 Era.” Four sessions covered themes specifically tied to COVID-19. Other sessions covered wide-ranging themes such as sustainability, science policy, inclusive participation, energy and the environment, and AI.

A smaller number of peer meetings took place online among S&T ministers, research institute leaders and academy of science presidents. The Regional Action on Climate Change (RACC) meeting also took place online during the meeting period.

This online annual meeting was a great success, and we are confident that we can provide more opportunities for live discussions and networking in a virtual environment at our 2021 annual meeting.
Among the Speakers of the 17th Annual Meeting, STS forum 2020

Michelle Bachelet
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Switzerland

Henry A. McKinnell
Moody’s Corporation, U.S.A.

Dr. Bernard Bigot
ITER Organization, France

Ada E. Yonath
Weizmann Institute of Science, Israel [Nobel Laureate 2009 (Chemistry)]

George Fu Gao
Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, China

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George Fu Gao
Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, China

Shinya Yamanaka
Kyoto University, Japan [Nobel Laureate 2012 (Physiology or Medicine)]

Ilham Kadri
Solvay, Belgium

Sethuraman Panchanathan
National Science Foundation (NSF), U.S.A.

Takeshi Uchiyamada
Toyota Motor Corporation, Japan

Ashwani Kumar
Supreme Court, India

Leila Zia
Wikimedia Foundation, U.S.A.

Hamman Riza
Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology (BPPT), Indonesia

Erwin Neher
Max Planck Society, Germany [Nobel Laureate 1991 (Physiology or Medicine)]

Joshua Bengio
Mila - Quebec AI Institute, Canada

Pedro Wongtschowski
Ultrapar Participações S.A., Brazil

Fabiola Gianotti
European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), Switzerland

Terry Brady
Underwriters Laboratories Inc., U.S.A.

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