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STSF or um
Science and Technology in Society forum
2020

Message from the Chairman

Koji Omi
Founder and Chairman
STS forum

STS forum, Science and Technology in Society forum, was founded in 2004 by Koji Omi, a former Minister of Finance and former Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy and for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs in the Japanese government. STS forum aims to provide a new mechanism for open discussions on an informal basis and to build a human network that would, in time, resolve the new challenges stemming from the application of science and technology. STS forum community also explores opportunities arising from science and technology and addresses how to remove barriers by using science and technology to solve the problems facing humankind.

The rapid progress of science and technology has brought economic growth and enriched the quality of our lives on the one hand. However, the advance of science and technology has raised important ethical, safety and environmental issues: possible negative applications are threatening humankind’s own future. We call these “the lights and shadows of science and technology”: we must develop the lights and control the shadows.

STS forum focuses on many aspects of science and technology in society: for example, technological development in genomics like genome engineering and iPS cell technology; energy and environmental issues including the nuclear power option; and social changes brought by ICT and related privacy and security issues.

Because the problems we face today are becoming increasingly complex, the scientific community alone cannot control these problems and also, they are beyond the control of any single country. Thus, it is essential that not only professional scientists like scholars and researchers, but also policymakers, and business leaders from all over the world gather and discuss these science and technology issues from the long-term perspective, i.e. 100 to 500 years, for the future of the humankind.

This is the fundamental concept of STS forum, where global leaders meet for three days at the forum’s Annual Meeting in Kyoto, starting on the first Sunday of October. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Honorary Chairman of STS forum, attends the Annual Meeting every year. Other prominent leaders attending in recent years have included the prime ministers of France, Sri Lanka, and Slovenia, and the deputy prime minister of the Russian Federation in addition to many Nobel Laureates.

In 2019, around 1,400 leaders from about 80 countries and regions, including 14 Nobel Laureates, met in Kyoto. In addition to ten plenary sessions and 24 concurrent sessions under eight themes, 11 side meetings, including the Science and Technology Ministers’ Round Table, the University Presidents’ Meeting, Global Summit of Research Institute Leaders, CEO and CTO Meetings were held, attended by 19 ministers, 44 university presidents, 17 research institute leaders, 21 CEOs and 35 CTOs.

The STS forum launched a “Dialogue between Future Leaders and Nobel Laureates” in 2015, and in 2019, 129 young leaders enjoyed stimulating discussions with 11 Nobel Laureates (currently, it is called “Dialogue between Young Leaders and Nobel Laureates”). The STS forum will continue to contribute to fostering younger leaders in various fields by inviting them to our networking opportunities in Kyoto and other locations.

The STS forum is also active in organizing outreach activities in the form of workshops. In 2019, four workshops were held: an India Workshop in Delhi, an ASEAN Workshop in Singapore, an EU Workshop in Stockholm and a TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) Workshop in Yokohama.

Now in its second decade, the STS forum has grown from a mere conference into a movement for global leaders to address science and technology-related issues for the future of humankind. We hope that many world leaders will join the STS forum Annual Meeting in Kyoto in order to “PAVE THE WAY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.”
Our Vision

1. Lights and Shadows

The explosive progress of science and technology has brought economic growth and enriched the quality of life, but also raised a number of challenges for society such as climate change and privacy in ICT. STS forum seeks to strengthen the lights and control the shadows of science and technology.

2. Collaboration among Academia, Industry and Government

No one country or constituency alone can solve the issues of science and technology facing the humankind. STS forum is a platform to form collaborative networks among global leaders in academia, industry and government in order for us to build a better world together.

3. Long-Term Perspective

STS forum takes a truly long-term perspective of 100 to 500 years ahead, thereby seeking to foster sustainable society for generations to come.
Specialized peer meetings are also held among science and technology ministers, university presidents, research institute leaders, funding agency presidents, academy of science presidents, academy of engineering presidents, & other world-leading scientists, policymakers and leaders of industry. Being prominent members of their respective fields, the panelists present their views on pressing issues on global society. The meeting is open to audience for a Q&A session.

A distinctive feature of STS forum is the multiple concurrent sessions on several key themes affecting the humankind.

During each session, speakers are allotted 6 minutes to deliver presentations, followed by active discussions. The concurrent sessions are open to all participants, who are invited to engage in practical, face-to-face dialogue on an equal footing.

The sessions also offer opportunities to build networks across borders and disciplines, bringing together leaders from around the globe who share a common recognition of the issues we face.

Plenary sessions feature panels consisting of Nobel Laureates and other world-leading scientists, policymakers and leaders of industry. Having prominent members of their respective fields, the panelists present their views on pressing issues on global society. The meeting is open to audience for a Q&A session.

In 2019, the number of participants at the STS forum 16th Annual Meeting has grown to around 1,400 from about 80 countries and regions around the world. Also the ratio between representatives of academia, industry and government has become well balanced over the years.