Opening Remarks

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We, all of mankind, are facing a crisis, which is bringing us to the brink of ruin.

The 20th century has made us collectively very affluent. We can now go around the world in 90 minutes, and the past can be recreated in real video images. Thanks to information and telecommunications technology, we can see what goes on in the world from our own homes. Our lives are now much more convenient, food is produced with higher efficiency, and people are living much longer.

However, not all developments have been good. Limited resources and energy are being used wastefully, and the environment has been polluted and destroyed. Perhaps because of this, we are seeing global warming, abnormal climates, floods, and desertification.

Friction occurs among countries, ethnic groups, and groups of different religions, ideologies, and languages, who bicker over limited resources. War, murder, terrorism, crime: all of these are rampant. If we remain on our present course, our world, our earth and mankind may face ruin.

Why have we come to this? Is there no way for us to save ourselves?

In order to resolve the crises of the 21st century, all the wisdom of humankind must be harnessed and trained towards maintaining sustainable world development.

There are two courses, broadly speaking, that we might charter. The first is to use the progress in science and technology to create a new global environment. The other is to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers and to mutually respect diverse values in building a multi-cultural, multi-linguistic society in the symbiotic pursuit of peaceful and prosperous co-existence.

There are three expectations for scientific and technological progress.

The first is the creation of a new global environment. Such an environment may enable us to cooperate in developing new sources of energy and obtaining water from the seas and from the air; to develop deserts, mountains, and deep seas into expanded livable space for animals, plants and ourselves; and to further improve the efficacy of food production.

The next important thing is to make effective use of the limited global resources we have. For example, we need to be more clever in recycling products and minimizing refuse.

Furthermore it is important to protect the global environment. We must conserve the consumption of energy, food, and water. We must reduce waste and pollution.

And for all these reasons it is essential that competent scientists and engineers
be educated and trained, and that the understanding of science and technology be promoted among all peoples.

In addition, building multi-cultural and multi-linguistic societies is also important for peaceful co-existence. That is the main topic of this symposium.

We need to create social environments conducive to mutual understanding. We must transcend cultural and linguistic barriers, mutually respect diverse values, appreciate different cultures, and demonstrate respect for the value of fundamental human rights. We must have the wisdom to reduce international conflicts, ethnic confrontations, conflicts over language, religious divisions and the tensions rising from differences in social strata.

Even living within limited resources it is essential to nurture understanding of international trade, and of political and economic systems; to nurture broad minds, and depth of vision; common sense, and the sense of wanting to contribute to one's society; a sense of ethics based on respect for life and human rights. All these must be nurtured, even as we deem necessary the nurturing of sound bodies and minds.

E-learning could play an important role in fostering the education of tomorrow's leaders in the social sciences, politics and economics. It could nourish them with the fruit of our greatest and most culturally refined minds. It could bestow and nurture in them love for humankind. E-learning could be a wonderful tool for advancing our multicultural understanding.

How might e-learning contribute to a multi-cultural co-existence?

What sort of mechanisms should be prepared in order for it to become an even more effective tool?

What kind of educational content will be useful for building a society of multi-cultural co-existence?

In what new ways might we deliver such worthwhile content?

These are the questions we face, and we hope that in answering these questions, e-learning may prove to be a tool by which the sustenance of our Earth and our humanity may be accomplished.