

AASSA-SCJ Workshop on Role of Science for Inclusive Society

1-3 March 2017 Tokyo, Japan

Chair's summary

Professor Hiroshi Yoshino, Chair of Local Organising Committee

- The AASSA-SCJ Workshop on “Role of Science for Inclusive Society” has been held for the past two days in Tokyo, Japan, at which we have had very informative and productive discussions.

- Since there are various regions in Asia, scientists are required to collaborate one another in tackling many complicated issues in order to realise an inclusive society, and to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the workshop, the issues related to social systems inherent in Asia have been discussed profoundly from a scientific point of view.

- To summarize the overall discussions, the following five important points are highlighted.

1. To respect diversities in the Asian region

- To realize the inclusive society, scientists should pay more attention to diversity in society when they undertake scientific research.

- The keynote lectures and the discussions of the following sessions showed that science could contribute tremendously to active involvement of diverse people in society. In particular, the role of science and technology in addressing the following issues was discussed. These are scientific study and applications to the handicapped people, health improvement and social participation of elderly people, acceptance of immigrants, promotion of female participation, and inequality and poverty problems.

- Asia embraces cultural diversities. These diversities are the advantages of the Asian society, and in order to realise a more prosperous society, the diversities should be fully utilised. Progress of science and technology will make it possible for all the people to participate in social activities without feeling any inconveniences.

- In this regard, it is important to fully consider strengths and needs of each region or community, and to engage stakeholders in society from an early stage of scientific research, that is “Co-creation”.

2. To enhance cooperation among different scientific disciplines towards an inclusive and sustainable society

- It is necessary for scientists to cooperate beyond the existing frameworks and to deepen their research objectives.

- The two-day discussions pointed out that problems which Asia are faced with were complicated, and widely showed that in order to tackle these problems it is important for scientists to break down silos.

- In particular, the vulnerability of the Asian region to climate change as well as to geological risks require scientists in different disciplines to further cooperate one another. For health improvement of elderly people, in addition to the application of the latest knowledge in medical science and physiology, innovation in urban structure and design of buildings is also necessary. To expedite female participation, a whole-of-the-society approach is indispensable. These can be called “New Systems Approaches”.

- Especially, regarding more vigorous women's participation, it would be highly appreciated that we had intensive discussions this time, based on the past undertakings by the AASSA.

3. To have a long view in addressing the future issues inherent in the Asian region

- The two-day discussions pointed out that it is important for scientists to have a long-term vision on the issues inherent in the Asian region.

- It is necessary to address the issues concerning mitigation and adaptation for climate change with a long-term view, although they are very urgent problems. On dealing with demographic issues, such as migration and population ageing, long lasting impact of these problems on society or local industry should be taken into account. Rapid progress in science and technology may also change the situation of agriculture and food production in Asia drastically. Especially, advancement of technology will make local customisation of the primary industry possible, which would influence the shape of regional industries as well as demographics in the long run. This has a huge implication for Asia, where countries are climbing up an industry ladder.

4. To think of contribution of technology to society which has been changed rapidly by science and technology

- In every session, a lot of time was spent on the discussion about the relationship between society and science and technology. Our conclusion is that science and technology are useful for the progress of society, even if there might be some temporary disruptions.

- In particular, discussions were made on the response of the Sri Lankan society to the usage of pesticides, people's perception of science after the Great East Japan Earthquake, among others, and it was shown that appropriate public understanding of the usefulness of science was important. Besides, appropriate evaluation of "risk" associated with science and technology and people's understanding of the risk are most essential. Profound discussions were also made on the relationship between society and science and technology, including some new tools, such as Social Networking Service (SNS), and it was concluded that the freedom and inclusiveness of science were indispensable in order to make science and technology useful for society.

5. To acknowledge the importance of the SDGs and to conduct its implementation

- The SDGs are actionable goals for the world to develop in a sustainable manner.

- To sum up the discussions of the workshop, science and technology can contribute significantly to the achievement of the SDGs through the pursuit of inclusiveness in Asia.

- To name a few, the role of science and technology in the activities of handicapped people and elderly people is to contribute to Goal 3 of the SDGs, Health. Their roles in food production, in promotion of female scientists, and in urban development for elderly people and universal design, are conducive to some corresponding Goals of the SDGs. The scientific endeavours of Future Earth can contribute to the overall success of the SDGs.

- Based on the workshop discussion, scientific organisations such as the AASSA, and national academies, are expected to strengthen their activities regarding the contribution of science and technology to the achievement of the SDGs with evidenced-based approaches.

- Lastly, the draft declaration, which was proposed by Chair, was discussed.