



Mamoru Mohri, a former astronaut and now Chief Executive Director of Miraikan, delivers his speech at SCWS 2017.

Connecting the World for a Sustainable Future

THE second Science Centre World Summit (SCWS) was held at the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation (Miraikan) in Tokyo, 15-17 November 2017. SCWS, a global meeting of professionals of science centers/museums and their partners from around the world, convenes once every three years. We asked Mamoru Mohri, Chief Executive Director of Miraikan and Chair of the SCWS 2017 International Program Committee, about the Summit.

Congratulations on your successful hosting of SCWS 2017. What is the significance and what were the main themes of SCWS 2017?

Thank you for the congratulations. The success of SCWS 2017 was due to the three plus years of effort and time from many people. The significance of holding the Summit was to establish the role of the science center complete with action guidelines that are different from the past. Global issues, such as climate change, energy problems, infectious diseases, and cyber security threats, which are all related to science and technology, are rapidly increasing. To solve these problems,

it is essential for ordinary citizens to be more engaged in science and technology. Many science centers around the world have yet to focus on these global issues with visitors, with efforts made to change each individual's behavior. The new role of science centers is to contribute to solving global issues.

The central theme of SCWS 2017 was "Connecting the World for a Sustainable Future." 828 participants from 98 countries and regions and of various backgrounds joined the Summit, and contributed their ideas during the many sessions of the event. During the Summit, strategies for the Tokyo Protocol were discussed with the aim to enhance public engagement and create concrete action plans on how science centers can collectively meet global issues and the sustainability of the human species.

What are the significant points of the Tokyo Protocol?

Viewing our beautiful Earth from space, one can easily see there are no borders or boundaries, just our planet with a multitude of life. The sight of

Photo: Courtesy of the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation

the thin, fragile atmosphere that covers, protects and allows life impressed me the most. We must assure the sustainability of Earth, the only place in the universe we know that can sustain life. Global challenges now threaten life, and humans must work together to meet those challenges. Thus, we, science center networks, created, and signed in June 2017 before the Summit, the Tokyo Protocol. The Protocol's call for action with clearly stated objectives guaranteed a focused summit for all participants - science center professionals as well as stakeholders. It also pronounces new roles for science centers as a platform that fosters the creativity and understanding necessary for reaching the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Please tell us about the SCWS goal that targets the building of a network for strong cooperation in every field, not only science and technology.

Since its inception, Miraikan has stressed that science and technology is a part, or a subculture, of culture, along with others like business, education, the arts to name a few. Each subculture develops its own wisdom that, in turn, contributes to the sustainability of the overall culture. This worked for nations for a long time, but now we are facing global challenges. The seventeen SDGs, adopted by the UN in 2015, offer targets to help meet those challenges in working towards sustainability. In SCWS 2017, six SDGs were addressed in panel discussions and they could be immediately acted upon by the science center community.

What is the role of the science centers in realizing the fruits of SCWS 2017?

The International Council of Science (ICSU)¹ is proposing the "Future Earth Project" dedicated

¹ ICSU, founded in 1931, is a non-governmental organisation with a global membership of national scientific bodies and International Scientific Unions. <https://www.icsu.org/about-us>

to involving all citizens. Science centers are uniquely positioned to become hubs for such activities, bringing together science and technology and those in business, education, government, research and development, religion, and the arts to name a few. Scientists now realize the importance of citizens' involvement and engagement, and with science centers being hubs, such diversity and cooperation can result in fresh approaches to solving global sustainability.

What do you think as the Chief Executive Director about the role of Miraikan, specifically?

Our perspective changed as of 11 March 2011, when the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred. We were forced to consider the real meaning of our activities. On that day, many people suffered from the natural disasters of the earthquake and the tsunami. Many people also suffered from the human-made catastrophe of the nuclear power plant explosion. As Miraikan, we realized we had to re-consider, better prepare and help protect humans from as many potential disasters as possible. Humans have a dominating impact on nature, and with that in mind, SCWS 2017 could help other science centers to prepare, too.

Is there any issue in particular that you would like to emphasize?

Many people in the world believe they have better knowledge, and yet, as they acquire more knowledge they seem less satisfied. Science and technology continues to contribute materialistically. However, satisfaction goes well beyond materialism, and must include the overall personal fulfillment of each person. Big data, AI and robotics will each play a role and aid in the quest for not just material possessions, but also intellectual and emotional satisfaction as well. 

Interview by HITOSHI CHIBA
