

The 4th Waseda Brussels Conference
“New Technologies and Regulation in Japan and Europe” (13 September 2022)

Concluding Words

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Prof. Masahiko GEMMA, Vice President of Waseda University,

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Distinguished Speakers and Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon,

[Opening]

I am extremely delighted to have been invited and given the opportunity to make my concluding remarks here.

This conference is the first to be held in an in-person format after a 3-year break due to the Covid-19 pandemic over the past 2 years. I would like to express my appreciation to all those who have been involved in the organisation of this conference.

Before starting my closing remarks, I would like to say a few words about what is ongoing in Ukraine. As you all know, six months have passed since the Russia’s aggression against Ukraine began. Since then, we have been deeply shocked by the large number of casualties, including innocent civilians. We have to stress that Russia should end its own starting war immediately. And on this point, Japan is united with Ukraine and all the partners including the EU.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I would like to take this opportunity to express my views on three points: 1) appreciation for Waseda University's activities, including this conference, 2) the main digital policy trends in Japan and the EU regarding today's conference theme, 3) expectations for future activities relating to new technologies and regulation.

[1. Appreciation for Waseda University's activities in Brussels]

Firstly, Waseda University, with the cooperation of Université Libre de Bruxelles - ULB, established the Waseda Brussels Office - WBO in Belgium in 2016. Since then, it has served as a bridge between Japan and Europe and organised three international conferences on timely topics. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Waseda University and WBO for their active promotion of academic exchanges between Japan and the EU. In particular, today's conference on the theme of "New Technologies and Regulation in Japan and Europe" has brought together science and technology perspectives with public policy with the aim of interdisciplinary discussions. I am convinced that it has successfully provided many insights for you all as experts, practitioners and officials in many fields.

The EU has been expanding its role in leading global standards in various areas, and we hope that Waseda University and the ULB will continue to actively contribute to academic exchanges between Japan and the EU in the future.

[2. Main Digital Policy trends in Japan and the EU]

(Digitalisation as Common Policy Agenda)

As a second point, discussions throughout today's conference focused on the ever-evolving relationship between digital technology and society. We are well aware that the increasing digitalisation of our society and economy, also known as the digital transformation, has become an important policy priority for both Japan and the EU. The Kishida Administration in Japan has been promoting the development of digital infrastructure and other related measures to boost digitalisation under the 'Vision for a Digital Garden City Nation'. In parallel, the von der Leyen Commission and EU Member States have been promoting various initiatives under the policy priority of 'A Europe fit for the digital age'.

(Japan-EU Digital Partnership)

On the basis of our current shared policy priorities, at the Japan-EU Summit in May this year, we launched the 'Japan-EU Digital Partnership' to work together on the digital transformation by identifying areas of common interest. This aims to promote Japan-EU cooperation in areas such as data flow, digital trade, next-generation telecommunications standards, semiconductor supply chains, AI and cyber security and others, in order to realise economic growth and a sustainable digital society based on high quality digital infrastructure.

In this context, it is very timely that today's conference has focused on the relationship between digital technology and society. I would like to thank everyone involved in these discussions.

[3. Future expectation for new technologies and regulation]

(Digital technologies and the Public sphere)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally as a third point, I would like to mention future expectations regarding technology and the public. As we all know, new technologies that were once emerging, including digital technology, have dramatically improved convenience in our societies and enriched people's lives. Today, emerging technologies such as the internet of things and AI are used in a variety of areas and have become deeply embedded in our societies.

On the other hand, the digital transformation will also pose various challenges. As discussed today, challenges such as AI and copyright, data privacy and cyber security are some of the cases that exemplify how digital technology has not only made our lives more convenient, but has also brought forth new social challenges to be solved. We need to establish appropriate rules to ensure that digital technology is useful to humanity.

(General perspectives on technologies and regulations)

Taking a holistic point of view on science and technology, in addition to digital technology, has had a significant impact on human society. We believe that emerging technologies need to be designed and managed so that they are created and utilised in accordance with our universal values of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

(Expectations for Japan-EU interdisciplinary and international cooperation)

Currently, in practice, digital technologies and other emerging technologies can be used easily across disciplines and borders and for various purposes. For this reason it is very difficult to define their governance and set regulations in specialised disciplines, specific countries or regions. An inter-disciplinary and international approach is crucial when it comes to addressing the public challenges arising from digital technologies, such as data free flow with trust, data privacy, intellectual property rights, digital currencies and disinformation.

I do hope that today's conference has provided one such opportunity for Japanese and European professionals from many fields. All of you who participated today are well versed in the technical and regulatory aspects, and therefore I look forward to your valuable input and insights.

[Closing]

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by expressing my hope that today's discussions on the relationship between digital technology, other emerging technologies and regulations at the 4th Waseda Brussels Conference will lead to further development and enrichment of academic and scientific discussions between Japan and Europe. At the same time, I am also optimistic that they will lead to greater digital business cooperation and policy collaboration between Japan and the EU.

Thank you very much for your attention.

(End)