Keynote Address by Deputy-Prime Minister Naoto Kan
at the Opening Ceremony of the 6th Annual Meeting
of Science and Technology in Society Forum (STS Forum)

October 4, 2009

Assembled Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to have the opportunity to deliver a keynote address to the opinion leaders of all sectors of society from around the world at the sixth annual meeting of the Science and Technology in Society Forum. As Deputy-Prime Minister, and also Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy of Japan, the country hosting the STS Forum, I would like to welcome all of you.

Before starting my speech, I would first like to express my deep regret and sincere condolences to those who are suffering from the damages caused by the recent big earthquakes off the shore of Sumatora.

The progress of science and technology has made it possible to improve our livelihoods and develop our economies. But, at the same time, the progress of science and technology has brought about negative impacts on humankind, such as global warming.

These are the so called “lights and shadows” of science and technology. And I regard the STS Forum as an important venue where policy makers, business leaders and journalists as well as scientists gather and discuss the issues on “lights and shadows” of science and technology.

The Japanese government has been putting a high priority on the

promotion of science and technology. But in former cabinets, only a few members had a background in science and technology.

Last month, we had a change of administration and the Hatoyama Cabinet was formed. In this cabinet, policy-makers with science and technology background hold key positions.

Namely, Prime Minister Hatoyama is the first Prime Minister with a Ph. D. in engineering in Japan. And Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirano and Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Kawabata and myself majored in science or engineering in college. In my view, this is an epoch-making step for the promotion of science and technology as well as for the political history of Japan.

The Hatoyama Cabinet has the basic policy of fully utilizing science and technology to stimulate the Japanese economy and to make international contributions, based on the recognition that science and technology make it possible to realize the dual goals of environmental protection and economic development.

One of the concrete measures to achieve these dual goals is the Hatoyama Initiative. As you know, Prime Minister Hatoyama announced this initiative at the United Nations Summit on Climate Change in New York on September 22nd.

Based on the premise that there will be an agreement on ambitious reduction targets of greenhouse gas emissions by all the major economies, he expressed that Japan will aim to reduce its emissions by 25% by the year 2020, if compared to the 1990 level, consistent with what science calls for in order to halt global warming. And he also expressed that Japan is prepared to provide more financial and technical assistance than in the past to developing countries and small island countries for solving climate change.

I'm very pleased to see that the Hatoyama Initiative is highly valued

by other countries. As you may know, this conference hall is the place where the Kyoto Protocol for global warming prevention was finalized 12 years ago. Now, international negotiation on a post-Kyoto Protocol framework is being worked on, and I hope that a fair and effective international framework in which all major economies participate will be established to halt global warming. And as a member of the Cabinet, I will do my best to realize this initiative.

It will be difficult to achieve the ambitious goal of the Hatoyama Initiative by utilizing existing technologies alone.

The development and utilization of innovative technologies is essential for the realization of the Hatoyama Initiative. Therefore, I would like hereby to propose Green Innovation.

I have always thought that Japan should strive to be a leading country in the world in the field of clean energy such as biomass and solar photovoltaic power generation. At the same time, we should revitalize our society through the promotion of agriculture and forestry.

As you know, the transformation of the primitive Earth with no life to our current Earth with diverse forms of life and abundant greenery was based on the mechanism that plant photosynthesis provides oxygen and accumulates solar energy into plants themselves.

And we can ensure sustainable energy by effectively utilizing the enormous amount of energy in plants which is gained by photosynthesis from sunshine.
Thus, it is the key to regenerate the Earth to take advantage of the power of plants.

I also think we can achieve social and economic revitalization by developing human resources and creating new business opportunities and employment in these fields.

Each country is now making serious efforts to overcome the recent global recession. We have to ensure economic recovery in the short term. But that is not enough. We also have to build a solid basis for sustainable growth in the mid to long term. I believe that revitalizing society based on Green Innovation is an effective approach to that goal.

By implementing Green Innovation and sharing our achievements and experiences with other countries, I hope that Japan can make substantial contributions in building a sustainable society in the world, where people achieve the dual goals of economic growth and environmental protection.

Global warming has been brought about by progress and by the utilization of science and technology. It is the negative side of science and technology. Green Innovation is an approach to solve global warming by using the wisdom of science and technology. In that sense, Green Innovation is a typical example of the issue of "lights and shadows" of science and technology, the theme of the STS Forum.

I am convinced that it is essential to proactively promote the positive side of science and technology while cleverly controlling the negative side of it, such as global warming, bioethics and the issue of peaceful use of nuclear energy by utilizing the wisdom of humankind.

I would like to make efforts to realize this belief.

I sincerely hope that participants to this STS Forum will hold active and fruitful discussions on "lights and shadows" of science and technology for the sake of our common future.

Thank you for your attention.