

EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN SLOVENIA

PRESS RELEASE

Ljubljana, 18 March 2021

Virtual Event: Society 5.0 – Cyber Security / Urban Air Mobility

On Thursday, 18 March 2021, the Embassy of Japan in Slovenia, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Administration of the Republic of Slovenia, the Slovenia-Japan Business Council and AV Living Lab company, organized a well-attended international online event with over 200 participants, dedicated to the Society 5.0 initiative.

This is an advanced development concept which originates in Japan and aims to create a smart, fair and comfortable society for all by using state-of-the-art technology solutions and by merging the physical and virtual worlds in order to address the essential social and economic challenges. Slovenia and Japan have been formally cooperating in the implementation of this initiative since early 2019.

This time, the event focused on two interesting areas inherently linked to the implementation of the Society 5.0 idea – cyber security and urban air mobility.

The participants were first addressed by Mr Boštjan Koritnik, Minister of Public Administration of the Republic of Slovenia, Mr Hiromichi Matsushima, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Slovenia, Dr Ana Polak Petrič, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to Japan, and Prof Dr Igor Papič, Rector of the University of Ljubljana. They emphasized the importance of close cooperation between the two countries, especially in the fields of technological and social development which leads to the realisation of the Society 5.0 concept.

Public Administration Minister Koritnik believes that economic and social well-being, as well as democracy and the protection of human rights to a large extent depend on how countries can safeguard themselves from cyber attacks.

Ambassador Matsushima pointed out that the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly changed the world and our habits, and we have been given a strong incentive to make a move towards digitalisation, therefore information security has become more important than ever.

Ambassador Polak Petrič emphasized the importance of bilateral cooperation between Japan and Slovenia that would lead to the implementation of the Society 5.0, as well as the need for improvement of the competitive edge of both economies.

Rector Papič highlighted the European equivalent of the Society 5.0, the Society 2050 which, in addition to new technologies, also places an important emphasis on the humanities and social sciences.

The keynote speech of the first part was then delivered by Prof Dr Motohiro Tsuchiya, a distinguished Japanese political scientist and information security expert, and Dean of the Faculty of Policy Management at the renowned Keio University Tokyo. Prof. Tsuchiya presented the Japanese experience, findings, measures and plans regarding cyber threats.

He first of all outlined the parallels between the geopolitical situation of the 19th century, when physical space was important in the so-called "Great Game", and today's geopolitical "games" which have been moving into cyberspace fast.

He presented a lesser-known fact that back in 2011, immediately after the disastrous earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident, Japan also suffered a series of cyber attacks from abroad that took advantage of the emergency situation. In response, Japan decided to develop a complex and integrated cyber security strategy.

When organizing this year's Tokyo Olympics, considered among the most challenging international events, Japan's safety plan focuses on the protection against terrorism, Covid-19 and cyber attacks.

"Nowadays, data is the most important commodity of all. Both the technological giants and states compete for these data to improve their services, and autocratic countries need them to control people," Prof Tsuchiya said, emphasizing the importance of the free flow of data combined with the respect for privacy.

He pointed out that the most important attack targets include modern data centres where precious data, including financial property data are stored, as well as the human brain which is very susceptible to manipulation and abuse.

Prof Tsuchiya is convinced that in cyberspace, country size does not play a significant role. He believes that Slovenia, too, can become a superpower in cyberspace, as it has the necessary technology and knowledge at its disposal.

He concluded his lecture with an important message saying the world today is playing a "cybernetic great game" which we must be well aware of and behave accordingly.

In the following discussion, Prof Tsuchiya was joined by Dr Uroš Svete, Director of the Information Security Administration of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr Jan Jona Javoršek, Head of the Networking Infrastructure Center at the Jožef Stefan Institute, Mr Nenad Šutanovac, Director of the Association of Informatics at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, and Mr Daniel Avdagič, Director of AV Living Lab, as moderator.

The debate established that Slovenia is a credible partner in the field of cyber security and that cyber resilience is one of the priorities of the upcoming Slovenian EU presidency. According to the speakers, we should be mindful of who controls our connections which are, after all, physical. They also pointed to the importance of establishing a better dialogue between the political and technological decision-makers who often do not really understand each other.

The discussion also emphasized that responsible conduct and cooperativeness of technological giants is crucial, since these companies often have more influence on cyber security than state regulators, and here is where the key to the public trust in cyberspace lies.

Finally, the importance of a good balance between freedom and security was stressed, for which a social, political and economic compromise is needed.

In the second part, Mr Marko Peljhan, Co-founder of C-Astral, Mr Aleš Zupančič from ELES, Dr Hiroko Nakamura, Deputy Director of Japan UTM Consortium, Dr Vassilis Agouridas from the EU's Smart Cities Marketplace platform and Airbus, Dr Yoshiaki Ichikawa from the Japanese University of Tama, and moderator Daniel Avdagič from AV Living Lab presented their views on urban air mobility (UAM), one of the key building blocks of smart cities of the near future.

The speakers agreed that UAM brings many innovations which follow the principles of the Society 5.0 concept. While mobility is now expanding into the third dimension, the role of cities in planning new forms of urban air mobility is increasing.

In order to establish a functioning UAM, it is crucial to adjust the regulative framework and standards on the one hand, and to achieve a social agreement and awareness that every innovation brings advantages as well as certain risks on the other. Our society must reach a compromise, the speakers concluded while highlighting noise as an important obstacle that is not compatible with the vision of silent cities of the future.

The participants shared the view that the event represented a new important step in the joint effort of Slovenia and Japan for a close and comprehensive cooperation in creating a better and safer society of the future.

A recording of the entire event is available at: society.avll.si