

**ADDRESS** by the President of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia, Alojz Kovšca, on the occasion of the Japanese seminar "The Role of the University in the Introduction of Society 5.0"

School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana, 3 March 2020

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Dear Lecturers and Students,**

**Dear Dr Metka Tekavčič, Dean of the School of Economics and Business,**

**His Excellency, Mr Masaharu Yoshida, Ambassador of Japan,**

**Dear Visiting Professor, Dr Yuko Harayama,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

I would like to warmly welcome you all here today on behalf of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia, the second chamber of the Slovenian Parliament. I am honoured to be given the opportunity to say a few words at today's seminar, where we will also broadly highlight the problems of Society 5.0 within the framework of the largest Slovenian university – in fact, directly with the digital generation. And such an experience is invaluable. On occasions like this one today, I always like to emphasise that the new paradigm of Society 5.0 is an extraordinary economic, social, scientific and research opportunity for Slovenia as a young, forward-thinking and progressive country to introduce this new development concept in practice as one of the first countries in the world. However, I am well aware that this is not an easy task and it cannot be implemented overnight. It involves the introduction of complex changes in society, a change in organisational culture at the European level as well as in Slovenia and its individual organisations and institutions. All this will, of course,

take place through digitalisation, which is why I emphasised in my opening address how delighted I am to see so many young and talented people in the audience. Digitalisation connecting different worlds and networking various business initiatives and different societies in the increasingly interwoven world we live in is something that we, the analogue generation, comprehend and identify with differently than you, the digital generation, who have lived with digitalisation all your lives.

In the previous forums organised by the Japanese-Slovenian Business Club – and we know very well that this development initiative introduced to the world comes from Japan – we learned about quite a number of very successful Japanese-Slovenian projects which all have in common that they can and are able to responsibly exploit scientific and technological advancement for a better and fairer society. The Japanese development initiative Society 5.0 is based on the establishment of conditions to foster coexistence between the virtual and the real world and to balance economic development focused on the joint resolution of challenges of how to create a better, super-smart and more comfortable society for people. I therefore look forward to the lecture to be delivered by esteemed professor Dr Yuko Harayama later in the seminar, for I am convinced that we, as a state and as a society, lack mainly knowledge. The understanding of why and how.

The challenges of the future are thus hidden in digital transformation, a term that has become one of the most popular and used terms in business communication. Instead of only thinking in clichés, as we are strongly accustomed to in politics, we should first of all pose the right fundamental questions and in doing so note that this is a concept with tectonic

consequences. It is actually more of a revolution in a social sense rather than a technological leap. Are we prepared for it, do we have enough knowledge and competences, are we empowered with the power of change brought about by it? What will our society look like in the future, which technological solutions will change its functioning and which business models will shape future development? These are only some of the questions that need to be answered today. We should be aware that complex ideas for a complex world can only be resolved by complex but not complicated processes where artificial intelligence and humans go hand in hand to the full extent. This process will result in political changes, new conflicts will be generated and new social stratification will occur – and yet, everything will be different from what we have been used to. I would like to see that Slovenia is on the right side of progress, of responsibility for people and the environment. This does not only depend on the country itself, but as professor Harayama says, we are all in the same boat, without exception.

We can already live the future by internalising the key values of this concept: sustainability, openness and inclusiveness. And this is a task for all of us, including the university.

I hope you have a very fruitful and interesting discussion at the seminar.

Thank you for your attention.