

Welcoming Remarks for the 6th Seoul Climate-Energy Conference on “New Climate Regime and the New Normal”

(December 20, 2019 @ Westin Chosun Hotel, Seoul)

Good morning distinguished guests, speakers, and students.

It is indeed my great pleasure to welcome all the participants of the 2019 Seoul Climate-Energy Conference. I would like to thank all the speakers, especially foreign speakers who made the long flight to Korea despite their tight schedules.

I also would like to extend my special thanks to our distinguished participants including former UN Secretary General Ki-Moon Ban, President of Korean Federation of Science & Technology Societies (KOFST) Myung-Ja Kim, and National Assemblyman Il-Pyo Hong.

I would also like to congratulate and thank Professors Sang-Hyup Kim and Ji-Yong Eom for organizing this wonderful conference.

This year’s conference, under the theme “New Climate Regime and the New Normal,” will explore the role of higher education in responding to climate change, and how emerging technologies and innovations will help bring about a sustainable society for the future.

Distinguished guests,

The world is now facing two significant transformations.

Without a doubt, one is climate change. The world is already 1.1°C warmer than at the onset of the first industrial revolution and the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased by more than 40 percent.

Extreme weather has become the new normal. This decade is set to be the hottest in history. The UN recently mentioned in an annual assessment that climate change is outpacing humanity's ability to adapt to it. Global economic losses from climate disasters are expected to be at 520 billion USD a year.

The second significant transformation is the one brought about by emerging technologies. However, technological innovation is also a critical acceleration and enhancer to implement national climate actions and achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, one of the main goals of the Paris Agreement will be only realized through technological innovations. Many countries have already turned their technology action plans into concrete actions.

The question is whether humanity can turn the technological breakthroughs of the Fourth Industrial Revolution into addressing the imbalance and inequalities the past industrial revolutions created: Most importantly, whether we can do it before it is too late.

Universities are also joining this global race. Education is evolving to meet the growing demand for global talents who can be confident in collaborating with partners from around the world and applying the new knowledge across convergent disciplines.

I have launched Vision 2031 for the year that marks KAIST's 60th anniversary, to drive innovation initiatives in education and research. It will help us become a university whose knowledge will make a real impact across global domains.

KAIST is addressing these global challenges with the three ingredients of creative education, technological innovations, and governance building.

Last May, we hosted the ‘P4G Innovation Sprint’ with the Technological University of Denmark in celebration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relation between Denmark and Korea.

Students from two countries got together to present a new sustainable business model for real corporations in the presence of the Crown Prince of Denmark. It was a shining example demonstrating collaborative efforts between teammates from diverse disciplines in dealing with such a global challenge.

KAIST is now moving forward to address global issues with global partners to benefit all of humanity.

We have continued our research in the fields of EEWS (Energy, Environment Water, and Sustainability) with global partners for decades and we are making significant progress on CO₂ management and green transportation. The Graduate School of Green Growth organizing this conference is working closely with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) and the Green Climate Fund, which are the global platforms for sustainability.

Last week, we opened a very important policy research center in collaboration with the World Economic Forum (WEF) at KAIST. The Korea Policy Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (KPC4IR) will develop policy norms and frameworks for accelerating the benefits of emerging technologies in the fields of AI, block chain, and many others.

Technological innovations should come with governance building. The KPC4IR will provide a solid foundation for accelerating innovations and helping them work properly.

Distinguished guests,

Last week, “Time” magazine chose 16-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg as the “Person of the Year.”

She delivered a very compelling speech at the UN Climate Action Summit in September and scolded global leaders saying: “Despite of crystal clear scientific evidence for more than 30 years, how dare you continue to look away? The eyes of all future generations are upon you.”

As a scientist as well as educator, I feel tremendous responsibility for this significant challenge especially to the young generations, who are also with us this morning.

I look forward to the scientists, government representatives, industry leaders, educators, and young students who joined this conference sharing their productive ideas for redefining the impossible and the possible for the generations to come.

Thank you very much.

December 20, 2019

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'S'.

Sung-Chul Shin
President, KAIST