

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

The words in our theme today have been presented to us as keys to the future. Science, technology and innovation may be what we need to ensure development, to build strong economies that will provide everything that we need and societies that will be well organised, the two together ensuring happiness for all. But the question has also been raised kind of world will they bring? Or more positively, how do we get them to work for us, to create the world that we want to live in.

Indeed, the words brought me to remember the novel 'Brave New World' by the English writer Aldous Huxley. In that story, technology is the tool that creates a seemingly perfect world of plenty and happiness for all but destroying individuality and personal freedom. That portrayal of society, presented almost 100 years ago, has not come to pass. Mankind has proved more resilient than that.

But surprisingly the stakes have remained the same. Technology has seen different waves, but our challenge remains how do we put it to good use for the benefit of mankind, and to avoid the dangers that it poses. Today, the debate is burning on the latest breakthrough in technology, artificial intelligence or machine learning as it is also called.

Science and technology, and innovation in their uses, can impact all areas of human endeavour. They can help us solve the world's problems but they can also change our world in ways that most of us don't want. The examples are already well-known. The issue of climate change has been raised constantly in this debate. It is the greatest threat to life as we know it on the planet. This itself, as

have come to accept, is likely the result of industrial advances, in other words, technology.

Science and technology can therefore threaten our world, but they can also save it. Again, if I go back to the example of climate change, science and technology can help us to reverse the destructive impacts for instance by finding clean energy that will enable us to power development while not polluting our environment.

I am impressed with the hope that has been raised in this meeting in particular the possibility of alternate energy sources that can alter the course of life on our planet.

Dear colleagues, coming from a small island state that is part of Africa, I cannot speak for the world. I can only say a few words for small developing countries like my own and for the continent to which my country belongs.

First we have to ensure that we are not left behind in emerging scientific and technological advancements and especially that we are not at the mercy of happens in the developed world. This unfortunately has been the pattern of history. We have to keep abreast of technological advancements and derive benefits from what is good but protect ourselves from what is bad.

In my mind, dear colleagues, there is only one magic word – Education.

Education for a modern world is the key to all doors. It is what will allow us to cope and prosper.

First of all, education and training can help us master advancements in these fields and chart our path through them. It will allow us keep up with developments and turn them to our

own needs. So if there is anything that we should do it will be boost access to education – to make sure that every child in our countries can get all the opportunity to develop their abilities to the full.

In regards to Africa, we have to ask what we can do for the 90 million children that do not have a clear path to education.

Access to education is the key to a knowledge based economy that can master technological advances and not be subdued by them.

Beyond access, we must improve foundational education that assures that every child has the basic tools in language and numeracy to ensure lifelong learning.

We must also improve the quality of education, modernise and adapt it to today's challenges. Since we are talking about science and technology, it means incorporating these subjects more comprehensively in our educational systems.

Education is also the key in which we can counter the dangers of technology that we fear to privacy, to communication, and social organisation.

Touching again on artificial intelligence, the buzzword in technology today. There is a lot of talk about how it can be a danger to democracy because of its capacity to manipulate information processes. Education has a role in that respect too because it is the best safeguard for democracy. An educated and informed electorate is the best protection against fake news and distortion of information.

So, let's invest in education. There is a role for parliaments of course. We can strengthen regulatory frameworks to channel the

use of technology in ways that are beneficial and to counter the threats. But in the end, it is only citizens who know the issues, who can analyse and make sound judgements, who can decide for themselves what is good for them, who will make that difference.