

# YUKARI NIWA YAMASHITA

Board Member, Director, The Institute of Energy Economics, Japan (IEEJ)

## Jim HOAGLAND

Thank you Meir, for letting us know that there is hope for the Middle East, there is hope for Israel, there is hope even for Bibi and Trump.

Our last speaker for the evening is Yukari Niwa Yamashita, who is board member and director of the Institute of Energy Economics in Japan.

## Yukari Niwa YAMASHITA

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be a part of this distinguished panel on the state of the world, closing session of this very prestigious World Policy Conference. I would like to also express my appreciation to the support from the office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Merci à Monsieur Thierry de Montbrial pour cette opportunité. First, I admit that I am a little lost here, not because I am the last speaker of the last session of the last day, but because I am standing on this podium among an elite group of panellists to talk about the state of the world. My background is not geopolitics nor international relations, I am an economist by training, and I conduct research in the field of energy and climate change. I am also a mother of two beautiful daughters, and a grandmother of two adorable grandchildren. Therefore, I think, I have a perfect reason to talk about the state of the world because it concerns me.

Although we have a tendency to think in terms of months or years, we also need to talk and think in terms of decades. Two decades ago, as a young Japanese economist, I remember discussing the details of the Kyoto Protocol. We believed that we were going forward, but we were also aware that we were running out of time. Twenty years later the planet is warmer, but it is still here, and will most certainly be here for centuries to come, and the future generations will inherit the world in the state as we left it for them. As long as Paris pushes the world into the future, and as long as it goes further than Kyoto did, I think the world that we are going to leave to the next generation will be fine. However, future generations will face this world as we leave it so I hope that the world will improve in the future.

I believe that we do not need more signatures on a piece of paper, but we need far more conviction and actions. 75 years ago the Little Prince, *Le Petit Prince d'Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*, was a keen observer of the state of our world. He said, 'The earth is not just an ordinary planet!', indeed, the earth is our living space. We should take good care of it. Of course, this may not be a good introduction for a discussion on the current state of the world, as advised by our moderator, but what does the state of the world mean? Is it like a health check, or is it like a report card on what is wrong and what is right, or is it like a summary of the news; what I know about the current state of the world that you do not yet know? Unfortunately we rarely get a balanced view of all global events because it is more newsworthy to report on disasters and tragedies than on good news. So far, at this conference, I have heard reference to issues in the EU, the Balkans, the Middle East, and Asia, and I have heard about wars, refugees, disruption, and growing inequalities. I also heard about tolerance, cooperation, peace, prosperity, and rising Africa. It is easier to remember the unresolved disagreements among us that inevitably affect our perception of the state of the world we live in.

Looking at the sky, lying on the ground at night, and looking for shooting stars, used to carry a touch of romance for everybody, young and old. For many around the world, shooting stars have been replaced by rockets and ballistic missiles. Is that the state of the world we accept to live in or just one more example of what is not acceptable? I believe that our world is getting better and better, and not worse, but we need to detect the basic vital signs to assess the overall state of our world. This is easier said than done for a little mother from a little island in the corner of Asia, so, like our current generation of students, I turned to the Internet. My daughters confirm that a smart phone can be the source of real and fake information. Believe it or not, in less than three seconds, the Internet made me very happy



because I got 1 million results on 'state of the world' with Bing, and 1.7 billion hits with Google. How could I go wrong? To my surprise, Janet Jackson's song, *State of the World*, is by far a more popular subject, with about 9 out of 10 references. I must admit that the song's lyrics confirmed many of our thoughts: 'What is happening to this world we live in? In our home and other lands, drugs and crime spreadin' on the streets. People can't find enough to eat. Now our kids can't go out and play [without fear]. That's the state of the world today...There has got to be a better way. Can't give up hope now'. I choose to be convinced that the overall state of our world is doing better than that.

Two years ago, just before the COP21 in Paris, I was on this World Policy Conference podium in Montreux, Switzerland. My presentation highlighted two topics. Firstly, I emphasized that we still lack technologies, finance and policies to address climate change in a large volume required to decarbonise our energy use, but we can still do it, while optimizing the total cost of mitigation, adaptation, and damage. Secondly, in order to meet the 2-degree target, we need to collect our resources and wisdom, to speed up and collaborate. Then the Paris Agreement was swiftly and unexpectedly adopted and ratified. This good news travelled the world, but soon we faced setbacks and uncertainties that many people have mentioned in the past three days, because of political turmoil and geopolitical issues.

We also need to remember that 1.2 billion people are still without access to energy today, and probably many more to come, and energy is required for economic development. It is not only power generation which requires energy, we also need energy for cement, steel and petrochemical products for roads, buildings and infrastructures. All of these need to happen but they cannot be achieved in a world where neighbors never stop fighting.

Unfortunately I must stress that there is no time to waste. We need astronomical numbers of non-emitting power stations, and they are needed in order to bring the CO2 emissions down to zero. According to surveys, we continue to express high concerns towards air pollution, water scarcity, and food security. It is mind-bugling to think that just 150 years ago the world population was 1 billion, 75 years ago it was 2.5, and now 7 billion and rising to 9-10 billion within the next 75 years. Will the state of our world accommodate this? Can we make this sustainable in a zero emission world? On the other hand, there is progress on gender gap, health, and education. There are also opportunities for innovation, technologies, economic development, trade, and investments.

Although from time to time the world faces setbacks caused by the fragility of peace and profound social instabilities, I am very happy to see the world community believes in dialogue and can agree on major issues such as climate. As Thierry said, statements such as, 'never' can become, 'maybe' or 'perhaps'. I choose to believe that one day we will report that the state of the world is no longer in intensive care nor in a critical state, but we will report that it is slowly heading towards a great healthy future. As Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Abe recently said, 'Now is the time to bring together the wisdom of mankind'. I am sure there is enough wisdom in this room to get started, and I sincerely hope that my great-grandchildren will enjoy looking for shooting stars.

#### **Jim HOAGLAND**

Thank you. The thought crossed my mind last night in the midst of the singing, dancing and drumming, that Thierry de Montbrial had created a historic moment in think-tank life, and tonight we have cited Janet Jackson as our guide for thinking about the world's problems. I cannot top that, so I think it is time for us to get off the stage with a final word from the man who organised this all, Thierry de Montbrial.