18th November 2017

It is my pleasure to propose some introductory remarks, at the opening of this important conference.

I am pleased that this conference will explore the role of diplomacy in today's world, particularly in the light of innovations in contemporary technology.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the Diplo Foundation on their 15th Anniversary. I must also commend the Foundation, for facilitating this event.

As I am informed, the intriguing questions under discussion today shall involve the role of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence ….. and how best can we prepare ourselves for the future.

I believe that these topics are central to what it means to be human; to have a human identity; to live within an ethical community of individuals; and how to interact in increasingly complex webs of technological inter-dependence.

Towards the end of my remarks, I shall present some your further deliberation.

However, first of all, I would like to make one basic, but, I believe, fundamental observation.

It is my firm conviction that all of our efforts, whether in the social, economic, political, or diplomatic spheres, must be directed towards promoting, establishing, and maintaining a deep-rooted spirit of cooperation and peace, for the benefit of all the inhabitants of our world.

I believe that artificial intelligence can, and must, be used to achieve positive outcomes, in terms of both building and maintaining positive peace, for all humanity.

Positive peace is not merely the absence of direct conflict and violence.

Rather, it is the cultural shift, which is needed within our communities and societies, to challenge the status quo, to ensure harmony and the necessary collaborative processes of diplomatic dialogue.

For this reason, I believe that the international community should prioritise technologies for peace, and not the development of armaments, used for warfare.

One basic example of using technology for building peace is translation technology.

Translation technology which would have seemed impossible a few decades ago, but has now advanced to such a high level of sophistication, that people are able to communicate, efficiently and effectively, with one another.

This is one simple example of the power that technology has, to connect people together.

Healthy communication, between communities of different nations and cultures, is an essential prerequisite for relationship-building and harmonious co-existence.

We must use these, and other tools, to improve our chances of nurturing sustainable and positive peace.

It is in this way that we can fulfil the most basic raison d'être of diplomacy, which is to facilitate dialogue among the communities, societies, and nations of our world.

Machines and artificial intelligence can never replace the uniqueness of human beings, however, they can provide invaluable support and essential knowledge, to support and sustain processes of peace.

So often, in order to achieve peace, we must transcend the limitations of culture, language, and understanding. For this reason, we must continue to promote a sense of unity.

Therefore, some of the questions I would like to propose, for further deliberation, include:

How can we utilise multidisciplinary approaches, such as computer science, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, and international relations, to promote the possibilities of artificial intelligence for peaceful processes?

What more can be done to ensure that contemporary and future technologies are directed towards encouraging unity and solidarity, rather than fostering division or conflict?

What significant ways are there, in which the expertise of diplomats, particularly in the area of intercultural dialogue, can inspire our technologies to value and promote processes of peace?

And finally, in what ways can we encourage more people to embrace the potential of artificial intelligence, and new technologies, to be a positive force in this uncertain world?

I augur that we shall all, thanks to this conference, learn more about the ways in which we can harness the potential of artificial intelligence and advanced technologies, to create a more sustainable and peaceful world, for the benefit of both present and future generations.