

April 2, 2026

## Congratulatory Address by Hiroki Totoki

First of all, congratulations to all of you on your admission to Waseda University. I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to your families.

I am Hiroki Totoki from Sony Group Corporation. I myself entered Waseda University 42 years ago, which makes me quite a senior alumnus compared to all of you. While the campus and its surroundings have changed significantly since then, hearing the university anthem again has reminded me of Waseda's long history and proud tradition, and brought back many fond memories. I sincerely hope your student life here will be both enjoyable and fulfilling.

As an alumnus, you might expect me to speak about my own student days. But to be honest, I wasn't exactly a model student. I spent most of my time enjoying life with friends, working part-time, and living quite a carefree student life.

This may have reflected the broader context of the time. As East-West tensions eased in the 1960s and 70s, the world remained relatively stable until the end of the Cold War in 1989. It was a time when students could pursue their lives without being strongly conscious of major global changes.

However, the era you are about to step into is somewhat different. With ongoing geopolitical shifts and the rapid advancement of technologies such as AI, the world is becoming increasingly uncertain and unstable. In such an environment, as you pursue your studies and broaden your horizons, how you perceive and respond to these global changes will be extremely important.

In January of this year, I attended the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, often referred to as Davos. Today, I would like to share two key points from that experience.

At Davos, leaders from politics, business, and academia gathered from around the world and engaged in active discussions about the future of the world. In particular, geopolitical developments and evolving competitive dynamics among nations were major points of focus. There was also a strong sense that the existing world order that has long enabled coexistence among countries and economies, may now be entering a period of fragmentation.

This is by no means irrelevant to Japan. For many years, we have conducted our business in a relatively stable international environment. Taking Sony as an example, while our past growth was undoubtedly driven by outstanding founders, numerous technological innovations, and the dedication of our employees, it is equally true that we benefited greatly from a largely peaceful global order.

However, in today's business environment, we are witnessing frequent disruptions to resources,

energy supplies, and supply chains caused by conflict and fragmentation. Unfortunately, I believe it will be difficult to return to the previous state of stability. We must move beyond the assumptions that have supported us and explore new paths for growth with greater flexibility.

In such a fluid and uncertain environment, it is essential to think independently and take initiative. To take initiative, in other words, is to embrace challenges. It means rather than waiting for someone else to provide the right answer, taking a step forward on your own.

Challenge inevitably comes with failure. Looking back on my own career, although I began in finance, I went on to launch an internet bank, taking an internet service provider public, and engaged in the entertainment business. Through these experiences, I took on many different challenges—but I believe I experienced far more failures than successes.

From my experience, I have often found that I can explain my failures with clarity—why they happened and what went wrong. Yet when I succeed, I often cannot fully explain it; more often than not, I feel I was simply fortunate. That is how much there is to learn from failure. Moreover, as you gain experience, you become better at failing “early and small.” By building on these lessons, you will gain an invaluable asset that will enrich your future. So I encourage you not to fear failure and to take on many challenges.

Another central theme at Davos, alongside geopolitics, was AI. Today, hardly a day that goes by without news on AI. Looking back at history, new technologies have always transformed society in profound ways. I believe we are now at such a major turning point.

I myself use AI on a daily basis. Knowledge that once took years to acquire, and research and analysis that required time and effort, can now be carried out almost instantly with AI.

Amid these developments, there are growing concerns that AI may take away human jobs. However, I believe AI will not simply replace human work but rather elevate it to a higher level. Throughout history, new technologies have created new professions and raised the standard for innovation.

In content creation such as films, music, and games, AI can also become a powerful partner. However, ultimately, it is humans who determine what to create and what meaning and value that creation holds. The works that truly move people’s hearts are often born from deep personal experiences and highly refined sensibilities, driven by a strong inner motivation to express a unique worldview. This is something profoundly human.

I often hear people ask what they should study in the age of AI. I would suggest beginning with a different question by asking yourself: “What is it that I truly want to achieve?” How do you want to contribute to society? What do you want to change? What do you want to create? What kind of

person do you want to become? It is this strong sense of purpose that will shape the questions you ask, what you value, the paths you pursue, and ultimately how you learn.

As we move into the age of AI, I believe the challenge is not to be used by AI, but to utilize it wisely with purpose. I encourage you to embrace its possibilities, while remaining guided by your own questions—and committed to finding your own answers.

Finally, discussions at Davos emphasized the need for stronger frameworks of cooperation for the future. This is important not only for companies and universities, but for each and every one of us.

At Sony Group, we have set forth a long-term vision we call “Creative Entertainment Vision,” aiming to deliver infinite Kando (emotion) through the power of creativity and technology, together with creators, partners, and employees. To realize this vision, it is essential to have the ability to connect diverse people and organizations. I often use the term “boundary spanner” when speaking to our employees. A boundary spanner is someone who connects people across organizational and disciplinary boundaries, shares knowledge and activities to create new value.

Waseda University brings together students from diverse backgrounds with diverse perspectives. During your time here, I encourage you to engage deeply with others, embrace different perspectives, and develop the qualities of a boundary spanner. I sincerely hope that, in the future, you will become individuals who connect the world and help overcome division.

In closing, may your years at Waseda be filled with intellectual curiosity, the courage to take on challenges, and encounters with lifelong friends.

Once again, congratulations on your admission.