

Report on a private meeting between Chancellor A. Merkel of Germany  
and Japanese scientists in Tokyo

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Earlier this year, I was approached by the Max Planck Society through Prof. R. Grosschedl (Co-Director of our Center) regarding a visit by Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel and her interest in meeting privately with Japanese scientists during her very brief sojourn to Tokyo for the purpose of further fostering ties between Germany and Japan. Because our Center so wonderfully embodies this endeavor, I agreed to participate in this event. The meeting was held in the morning of March 9<sup>th</sup>, soon after her arrival in Tokyo and prior to her meeting with the Prime Minister and other politicians in Japan. There were a total seven scientists, whose specialties included law, mathematics, and science policy; I was the only participant from the medical sciences.

The meeting was about one hour in duration and the Chancellor asked many interesting and critical questions to the participants. I took the liberty to explain to her the scope and perspective of our Max Planck Center and believe that she appreciated the importance of our Center. She then asked me about my view on the strength and weakness of Japan's science and the importance of global cooperation in our field. I replied her that if we admit that Japanese science has become internationally renowned, particularly in the past decades, this achievement stems from the government's long-standing policy to support basic research, spanning from humanity to applied sciences, referred to *Gakujyutsu* in Japanese and possibly corresponding to *Wissenschaft* in German. I then told her, as a weakness, that current science policy in Japan is changing, with more weight placed on the application and development of science as a means to stimulate the Japanese economy. I expressed my argument that this policy has potential flaws in the long-term. I also mentioned to her that while there are issues for which only politicians can take a leadership role, many others can be addressed by scientists. As such, mutual cooperation based on trust between politicians and scientists is the basis for harnessing the power of science to create a better world.

The entire meeting with Chancellor Merkel was very pleasant and, hopefully, productive for both sides. I was very impressed by her intelligence and warm personality with very solid, deeply committed standpoint as the Chancellor of Germany. It was very pleasing that German Embassy

told me afterwards that she mentioned to her staff members, in the plane on her way back to Germany, that she particularly enjoyed our meeting.

