



## **Visionaries debate future of work at Mazda Space**

- **Impact of technology on jobs in focus at third Barcelona Challengers Conference**
- **Speakers call for a flexible, open-minded approach to reap innovation's rewards**

Barcelona / Leverkusen, 24 September 2015. The current technological revolution continues to have a tremendous impact on the way the economy functions, and in particular how people earn a living. What is one of the most important issues of our time took centre stage at the third and final Barcelona Challengers Conference, held yesterday at Mazda Space in front of an international audience of around 150 students, professionals and social activists.

“Times of change – how innovations and technology influence the future of work” was the theme, and the consensus was that the transformation of society already under way could bring many positive outcomes if only there is the will to make it happen – and the prudence to proceed with a healthy dose of diligence.

In a keynote interview, Nobel Peace laureate Jody Williams voiced her concerns about machines replacing people in the workplace. “Every time you use technology and not human beings, you destroy your business because they cannot buy your products. We are systematically destroying society [with this approach].” The American, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for her struggle to get land mines banned, has been focusing more recently on autonomous lethal weapons.

Dr. Guy Standing, a professor at the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies, also advised caution. He argues that the short-sighted, profit-driven course of globalisation and technological innovation has led to the formation of the “precariat”, an emerging underclass defined by a lack of economic security. A vocal proponent of a universal basic income, Standing calls for a new paradigm for labour markets in response to growing inequality and the potentially disastrous social and economic hardships it fosters.

The next speaker, social entrepreneur and futurist Federico Pistono, had a less pessimistic take, claiming today’s technology gives us the means to solve many of the world’s most pressing problems, including climate change. And by creating more wealth from less

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(human) work, people become free to pursue more desirable endeavours. Pisono's talk – "The Star Trek economy: Rediscussing the social contract, basic income, and ways to fix capitalism" – follows on his 2012 bestseller *Robots Will Steal Your Job, But That's OK*.

Dr. Alex Bandar concluded the session of TED-style presentations with "The Democratisation of Design". He suggested technology gives anyone the power to be an inventor and entrepreneur, and believes the "maker movement" will fundamentally change the economy for the better by inspiring individuals to manufacture their ideas into reality.

In the ensuing panel discussion Standing, Pisono and Bandar examined among other things who will benefit most from the technology revolution and who risks being left behind. Society, they concluded, must embrace new approaches, from technologically focused education to basic income systems, if it is to reap the most potential from this exciting new era. Otherwise we will face tremendous economic, social and environmental challenges that current labour market doctrines are ill-equipped to handle.

Drawing a cumulative audience of more than 400, the Barcelona Challengers Conferences provided the opportunity to meet and learn from a number of Nobel Peace laureates as well as internationally recognised visionaries, policymakers and entrepreneurs. Yesterday's conference and the two preceding it – themed "Women's leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century" and "Building bridges – how peace is made" – also reflect the Mazda brand's challenger spirit and that of the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates. Mazda is again a leading partner to this year's summit, to be held in Barcelona on 13-15 November.

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