"Japan is home to many dormant technologies that have the potential to change people's lives and the way the world works," says Fariza Abidova, an entrepreneur from Uzbekistan. Regardless of how outstanding a technology is, ideas from a single company or industry are often insufficient to apply that technology to the creation of an innovative product or business model. “Open innovation” is a paradigm aiming to overcome that predicament and is garnering much attention in recent years. It goes beyond the boundaries of companies, industries, and even countries to gather and develop expertise in the pursuit of problem-solving innovation. Many companies around the world now practice open innovation in order to address challenges not resolvable by one company alone. After graduating from Kobe University, Abidova began to hold corporate training sessions for global human resources in Japan. It was during this time that she visited a client’s R&D facility where she was shocked to see that, due to the difficulties in finding and building relationships with business partners from other countries and cultures, many cutting-edge technologies were lying unused. “It made me want to become a bridge between Japanese companies and those of the rest of the world. I can’t offer any technology-related assistance, but I can provide support to overcome cultural differences and facilitate communication.” At Trusted Corporation—a company she co-founded in 2016—Abidova is advancing projects related to vehicles and logistics for smart cities, with a focus on activities that connect companies in Japan and Europe. Not only does she actively work to find the most befitting business partners—from among 5,000 European companies selected by her firm over a four-year period as promising potential partners—but she also preemptively analyzes problems that Japanese companies are likely to encounter in the course of carrying out a project. Abidova provides the support needed in fine detail, from clarifying visions and challenges to building good communications and relationships with the partner companies. Her background and work history make her the optimum candidate for that task; having built up her career and relationships with the partner companies, she has naturally learned to understand and respect cultures different from her own. According to Abidova, during the course of conducting global business, a lack of understanding of the other party’s culture and background has often prevented the proper communication of one’s real intentions, leading to unexpected problems and distrust. She has always wanted to help bridge such gaps.

Uzbekistan flourished as a crossroads for trade between the East and West on the Silk Road. It is renowned for the beauty of its World Heritage Sites such as the city of Samarkand, but also faces many challenges, with some areas lacking a proper gas infrastructure. If life in the world can be made more comfortable and convenient through open innovation, Abidova believes that the living environment in Uzbekistan will also improve. That is how she hopes to contribute to her country through her life’s work. “There are many problems that can be solved through the power of technology. Every day is an exciting one when I think that the work that I do could help change the world.”