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ABB and Kawasaki create world's first common interface for collaborative robots

ABB and Kawasaki Heavy Industries, both global leading players in industrial automation and robotics, are showcasing the world's first common collaborative robot operating interface at automatica in Munich, Germany from June 19-22, 2018.

The common interface will also help address the shortage of skilled workers in many industries. In Japan for example, one person in five is within a decade of retirement.

Demand for collaborative robots has outpaced the rapidly-growing industrial robot market, as easier-to-use robots open doors to new users. The fact that collaborative robots can be programmed and operated by people without specialized training helps small and medium enterprises, in particular, to leapfrog traditionally longer industrial robot learning curves.

Collaborative robots (cobots) that can be operated by nearly any user can help offset labor shortages. Their flexibility to work nearly anywhere in a factory without safety barriers also makes them ideal for meeting sudden and unexpected demand peaks.

"The new state-of-the-art, industry-standard operating interface will accelerate the already rapid growth we see in collaborative robots," said Per Vegard Nersteth, Managing Director of Robotics for ABB. "It will give many new manufacturers flexibility and scalability, while providing more interesting jobs for the world's vital industrial workforce."

The interface is a result of the collaboration between ABB and Kawasaki announced in November of 2017, designed to share knowledge and promote the benefits of collaborative automation, in particular dual-arm collaborative robots. It includes a simplified human-robot interface with intuitive, smartphone-like navigation and icons.

Yasuhiko Hashimoto, Managing Executive Officer and President of the Precision Machinery and Robot Company, Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd., said: "We are proud to take this first big step together with ABB and it is entirely appropriate that we usher in a new age of collaboration automation with a collaborative approach. Collaborative robots will make a large contribution to society in making manufacturing more flexible and efficient and in keeping our factories productive with an increasingly scarcer workforce."

A joint collaborative automation demonstration located at the East Entrance of automatica will feature Kawasaki's unique and innovative Dual-Arm SCARA Robot "duAro" working together with ABB's dual-arm YuMi robot.

In addition to continued development of the operating interface, the collaboration also focuses on other topics such as common safety standards. Traditional industrial safety standards are based on years of practice, supported by very specific parameters. The goal for collaborative automation is to develop safety standards which ensure worker safety, but also allow for entirely new ways of working together without unduly restricting collaborative robots' many benefits.

ABB (ABBN: SIX Swiss Ex) is a pioneering technology leader in electrification products, robotics and motion, industrial automation and power grids, serving customers in utilities, industry and transport & infrastructure globally. Continuing a history of innovation spanning more than 130 years, ABB today is writing the future of industrial digitalization with two clear value propositions: bringing electricity from any power plant to any plug and automating industries from natural resources to finished products. As title partner of Formula E, the fully electric international FIA motorsport class, ABB is pushing the boundaries of e-mobility to contribute to a sustainable future. ABB operates in more than 100 countries with about 135,000 employees. www.abb.com

ABB Robotics is a pioneer in industrial and collaborative robots and advanced digital services. As one of the world's leading robotics suppliers, we are active in 53 countries and over 100 locations and have shipped over 400,000 robot solutions in a diverse range of industries and applications. We help our customers to improve flexibility, efficiency, safety and reliability, while moving towards the connected and collaborative factory of the future. www.abb.com/robotics

Kawasaki was founded more than 120 years ago and has been developing globally while producing revolutionary products by working together to ensure technology synergies across its different divisions.

Kawasaki is now recognized as a global leader in diverse industries in wide ranging fields going beyond land, sea and air, offering state-of-the-art technologies for environmental and energy infrastructure, machinery and robotics, and various types of transportation in marine, railway and aerospace to a leisure vehicles as motorcycles and personal watercraft in global basis with about 35,800 employees. global.kawasaki.com

Kawasaki Robotics is a leading supplier of industrial robots and robot automation systems with a broad product portfolio having shipped 180,000 robots in about 50 countries. As a pioneer in Japan, Kawasaki celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2017. As one of the world's leading robotics suppliers, we are now transforming ourselves from an industrial to a fully integrated robot supplier. Kawasaki is a solution provider having deep application know-how through diverse business and products on land, sea and air. robotics.kawasaki.com

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