

6 March, 2026

SMBC Nikko Securities Inc.  
Nethermind (Demerzel Solutions Limited)

**SMBC Nikko Securities and Nethermind Announce Collaboration to Research and Develop Secure Access to Decentralized Finance (DeFi) Trading using Agentic Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Japan**

**TOKYO, Japan, March 6, 2026** — SMBC Nikko Securities Inc. (hereinafter “SMBC Nikko”) and Demerzel Solutions Limited, operating under the trade name Nethermind, with an established operational presence in Japan through its Tokyo office (hereinafter “Nethermind”), today announced a collaboration to jointly explore and prototype technical approaches for secure and controlled access to DeFi markets in Japan, including the application of agentic AI technologies for trading.

Blockchain technology is expected to play an increasingly important role in the evolution of the financial sector. Concurrently, DeFi introduces market structures that differ fundamentally from those of traditional capital markets. SMBC Nikko believes that financial intermediaries continue to play an important role in supporting market integrity and user protection through the responsible adoption of new technologies.

*“Our goal is neither to defend traditional finance nor to push innovation beyond the regulatory framework. We aim to examine how emerging technologies can be responsibly adopted to enhance market efficiency while maintaining appropriate regulatory discipline and user protection.” - Taisuke Isono, General Manager of Nikko Open Innovation Lab*

Through this collaboration, SMBC Nikko will explore the design of tools and frameworks intended to enable secure and controlled interaction with DeFi markets. The initiative will initially focus on automated market makers (AMMs), with particular emphasis on examining approaches to enhancing operational robustness, risk management, and user safeguards within decentralized environments.

SMBC Nikko and Nethermind will examine the potential application of advanced technologies, including smart contracts, AI, and zero-knowledge proofs (ZKP) to support user-friendly and secure approaches to the DeFi market. Agentic AI will be explored to support the curation of user-defined risk preferences, controlled automation of trading and asset-allocation processes associated with DeFi participation, operating within predefined parameters rather than a fully autonomous execution mechanism.

In line with Japan’s Financial Services Agency’s (FSA) recent regulatory movements pertaining to digital assets, these initiatives are intended to serve as a testbed to explore democratization of access to DeFi, while also providing a reference case to support industry dialogue within the context of Japan’s evolving regulatory framework.

Nethermind contributes deep technical expertise in blockchain infrastructure, AI, and security, together with experience across global DeFi ecosystems. These capabilities complement SMBC Nikko's expertise in financial markets, risk management, and regulatory engagement, enabling a balanced and disciplined approach to addressing the technical and structural challenges associated with DeFi adoption.

*“Through this collaboration, Nethermind brings technical expertise in blockchain infrastructure, AI, and cryptographic security to complement SMBC Nikko's deep understanding of regulated markets — exploring practical pathways for responsible DeFi access that serve the broader financial ecosystem.” - Delane Foo, Regional Managing Director (APAC) at Nethermind*

As part of the initiative, SMBC Nikko and Nethermind have presented a conceptual demonstration of a DeFi access gateway at the Yield Summit 2026, illustrating potential approaches to enabling secure interaction with DeFi infrastructure. SMBC Nikko also welcomes constructive dialogue with industry participants, collaborators, and subject matter experts with relevant expertise to support exploration of this initiative.

### **Company Profiles:**

Company Name: SMBC Nikko Securities Inc.

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Company Name: Nethermind (Demerzel Solutions Limited).

Representative: Delane Foo, APAC Regional Director, Nethermind.

Japan Representative: Ujwal Kumar, Japan Lead, Nethermind.

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