Section 1

Realizing a Society of Advanced Information and Communications Networks

1 Promotion of the national ICT strategy

Recognizing that the first-phase targets of the ICT strategy are in the process of being achieved, the IT Strategic Headquarters evolved the strategy into the second phase—the expansion of IT use—and in July 2003 formulated e-Japan Strategy II. For the realization of an "energetic, worry-free, exciting, and more convenient" society, e-Japan Strategy II takes up seven areas for leading efforts including medical care, food, and administrative service.

In an effort to securely implement e-Japan Strategy and e-Japan Strategy II, the IT Strategic Headquarters has formulated the e-Japan Priority Policy Program every year, clearly indicating the concrete measures, the competent ministries and agencies, and the time limit for the implementation. In June 2004, the e-Japan Priority Policy Program - 2004 was drawn up. The e-Japan Priority Policy Program - 2004 has two aspects: a priority policy program to ensure the achievement of the 2005 goals (last program) and a priority policy program to serve as strategic steps for goals in 2006 and beyond (pre-program). Furthermore, since 2005 is the year for attaining the goals of the e-Japan Strategy, the IT Strategic Headquarters laid down the IT Policy Package - 2005 in February 2005 to put forth the last spurt from a user perspective without slowing down the efforts to date. This package mainly contains measures in fields familiar to people's lives, such as administrative service, medical care, and education.

2 u-Japan Policy

In order to study measures and challenges toward achieving u-Japan, the MIC established the Policy Roundtable for Realizing a Ubiquitous Network Society in March 2004 and compiled the "u-Japan Policy" in December of the same year.

The basic concept of the u-Japan Policy stands on the following three principles.

First is the development of ubiquitous networks. While conventional infrastructure development had centered on wire communications, a shift from narrowband to broadband such as DSL, CATV, and optical fiber, the u-Japan Policy aims at building seamless ubiquitous networks where users need not be conscious of whether the communication is wired or wireless.

Second is advanced use of ICT. Conventionally, use of ICT was often intended for pioneering digitization or boosting up digitization wherever lacking. However, the u-Japan Policy focuses on using ICT to resolve social problems.

Third is upgrading an enabling environment. The spread of ICT to all areas of daily life could further increase concerns and obstacles that are already emerging in the cyber society and generate new unexpected problems. In order to clear these problem in advance, the u-Japan Policy includes drastic measures in the area of use environment.

Through implementation of the policy based on these three principles, the u-Japan Policy aims to achieve a "value-creating" society where ICT penetrates every corner of life like grassroots and various new values are generated through creative ICT use.

Section 2

Development of Information and Communications Policies

1 Development of Telecommunications Policies

(1) Study on ideal method of calculating connection charges from fiscal 2005 onward

The diffusion of mobile phones and rapid rise of IP phones have dramatically changed the environment surrounding fixed line telephones, such as the considerable and continuous decrease in the traffic from fixed line telephones. In light of this situation, the MIC consulted the Telecommunications Council in April 2004 about an ideal method of calculating connection charges from fiscal 2005 onward. In response, the council submitted a report on the calculation method of connection charges and the handling of the non-traffic sensitive (NTS) costs (the costs that arise irrelevant to the amount of traffic), among other matters.

Based on this report, the MIC revised the regulations for interconnection charges and started applying the new connection charges in April 2005.