

expectation as a form of infrastructure that, among other things, leads to economic development, the expansion of employment, and improvement of the national life. In developing countries though, there are still, for example, about 30 countries in which the telephone diffusion rate does not even reach one unit per 100 persons, and the international digital divide is widening. Therefore, there is a growing need to construct information and communication networks around the world, including in developing countries.

The MIC supports human resource development in the ICT field, assists with the formulation of ICT policies and systems through policy dialogue with information and communication ministries in developing countries, assists with development of information and communications infrastructure through implementation of joint international experiments and so on, and supports international and regional organizations that promote global cooperation for eliminating the international digital divide. At the same time, it contributes to the sustainable development of the information and communications field in developing countries in cooperation with such organizations as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the Japanese Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC), mainly through official development assistance (ODA).

### 3 Promoting international standardization activities

The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly 2004 (WTSA-2004) was held in October

2004, and an agreement was reached on the standardization themes and frameworks for the next study period (2005 to 2008), including promotion of standardization activities concerning next-generation networks, reinforcement of efforts related to home networks and security, and strengthening of efforts in the Internet field, such as measures against spam (unsolicited e-mail). In addition, chairs and vice-chairs of the study groups (SGs), which conduct the concrete standardization activities, were appointed. From Japan, all candidates—two chairs and eight vice-chairs—were appointed.

In June 2003, the ITU Radiocommunication Assembly (RA-03) for 2003 was held in Geneva, Switzerland. In this meeting, the organization of ITU-R such as the structure of SGs was decided, SG chairs and vice-chairs were appointed, the working methods were reviewed, draft recommendations were approved, and proposed research themes for the next study period were approved.

Revision of a working method usually requires a two-phase procedure involving adoption and approval until a draft recommendation is approved. However, the “procedure for simultaneous adoption and approval,” which is a method to shorten the procedure to a single phase (simultaneous) procedure for speeding up, was introduced. As a result, the shortest period from formulation of a draft recommendation until it is adopted and approved will be shortened from the current seven months to three months.

## Section 10

### Development of Postal Administration

#### 1 Efforts of Japan Post, etc.

##### (1) Outline of Japan Post

The government released the “Basic Policy on the Privatization of the Postal Services” in September 2004. The basic policy indicated that Japan Post will be privatized in 2007, and its privatization will be finally completed after a transitional period based on the five basic principles in advancing privatization of the postal services (revitalization, consistency, convenience, resource utilization, and consideration) in order to achieve the following interests of the people: (i) the potential of the four functions of postal services (over-the-counter services, postal services, postal savings and postal life insurance) will be fully demonstrated, high-quality and diverse services will become available at low prices through freer business management in the market, and maximum convenience will be achieved; and (ii) funds

that had been flowing into the public sector will flow into the private sector, and it will be possible to make use of people’s savings for revitalizing the economy.

The government submitted the necessary bills to the 162nd session of the Diet in April 2005 based on this basic policy.

##### (2) Entry into the correspondence delivery business

In conjunction with the launch of Japan Post in April 2003, the “Law Concerning Correspondence Delivery Provided by Private-Sector Operators” (Correspondence Delivery Law) went into effect, permitting the entry of private operators into the correspondence delivery business, which previously was monopolized by the state.

There are two types of correspondence delivery business: the general correspondence delivery business for “complete participation nationwide” and the special cor-

correspondence delivery business for providing “special services.” Since the Correspondence Delivery Law imposes requirements that are specific to delivery of correspondence, such as confidentiality protection of the correspondence, providers of the correspondence delivery business must acquire a license from the Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications. At the end of fiscal 2004, 111 carriers had acquired a license for special correspondence delivery business, out of which 71 had already launched the service.