Section 4
Development of affluent and vital ubiquitous network society

1. Elimination of geographic digital divide and promotion of information system to local communities

In the New Reform Strategy, the government of Japan listed the promotion of optic fibers, etc., in its efforts toward elimination of zero-broadband regions by 2010 as one of its targets. In line with government policy, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) formulated the "Next Generation Broadband Strategy 2010" in August 2006.

Furthermore, in order to discuss specific measures for the elimination of zero-broadband regions, poor radio reception zones for mobile phones and digital divide, the MIC has held meetings of the Strategic Meeting on Bridging Digital Divide since October 2007. The MIC has also held meetings of the Study Group on Establishing Usage Environment for Next-Generation Broadband Technology since November 2006 with the aim of discussing measures for establishing the usage environment for the technological aspects that would facilitate penetration of next-generation broadband technologies toward elimination of zero-broadband regions. The Study Group released its report in June 2007. Based on the recommendations of the Study Group, the MIC will continue to deliberate on the measures for establishing the usage environment for broadband technology.

2. Regional development, etc. utilizing the information and communications infrastructure

Since correction of the regional divide is an urgent issue, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) is committed to the development of a support system for creating a model for success, by means of (1) dispatch of regional informatization advisors, and (2) taking measures, such as the launch of a regional informatization caravan, etc., in the areas which are making active efforts for regional revitalization through ICT, with a view to revitalizing the regional socio-economy through the creation of a ubiquitous network society in the regions. At the same time, the MIC will boost the local economy and society that would make use of the structural reform capacity of ICT by disseminating its knowledge, experience and knowhow throughout the country.

Furthermore, the MIC has been promoting the dissemination of a "regional information platform", the standard specification that stipulates rules to be followed by individual systems, so that information systems of municipalities, etc. can be mutually connected and coordinated. The MIC then developed technologies that would enable coordination between systems for municipalities, etc., and formulated standard specifications, etc. In the future, in order to put systems in place at the earliest possible time, which are in line with the standard specifications, the MIC will conduct demonstration tests in the house-moving field and will extract various operational issues and present solutions for such issues.

3. Promotion of barrier free information

Currently, various services are widely offered through information and communication devices or websites, and therefore, it is important for the elderly and disabled persons to be able to use these devices and services easily, or, in other words, to ensure accessibility. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) is promoting the active use of the "Operational Models for Governments' Websites for Everyone" that offer specific operational models for maintaining and improving web accessibility, enabling all people to use public websites. Also, with respect to telecommunications accessibility, the ITU-T approved the Telecommunications Accessibility Guidelines, which had been discussed at the instigation of Japan, as an ITU Recommendation in January 2007. In response, the MIC has been making efforts toward the dissemination and penetration of the said guidelines.

Furthermore, the MCI formulated the "Guidelines for Broadcasting Administration for the Visually and Auditory Impaired Persons" in October 2007 for the promotion of close-captioned broadcasting, sign language broadcasting, and narration broadcasting, in view of progress in digital broadcasting technologies and services in the future.

4. Promotion of informatization of administrative services

(1) Realization of e-Government
The government has thus far been promoting

improvements of usability and service quality, administrative reform to leverage IT, and establishment and enhancement of e-Government, based on the e-Government Construction Program, the Future Administrative Reform Policy, and the IT Policy Package-2005. Also in the IT New Reform Strategy, realization of "the most convenient and efficient e-Government in the world" is specified as one of the IT structural reform policies.

Based on the IT New Reform Strategy, the Liaison Conference for Chief Information Officers (CIO) of Respective Ministries formulated the "e-Government Promotion Plan" (August 2006) to implement future e-government plans properly and to achieve the expected results following the PDCA cycle (revised on August 2007). The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) plans to conduct the steady promotion of the informatization of administrative services based on the plan.

(2) Realization of e-Local Governments

e-Local Governments aim to upgrade administrative services and simplify and streamline administration through the use of ICT by local governments. In March 2007, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) issued the "New Guideline for Promoting e-Local Governments" in order to "realize a useful, effective and vital e-local government by fiscal 2010." and conducts annual follow-ups of the progress of implementation.

Hence, using such infrastructure as Local Government Wide Area Networks, the Resident Registration Network System, and the Public Certification Service for Individuals, the MIC has been promoting effective e-Local Government and taking various measures from financial and human resource viewpoints, etc., to improve local services.

5. Promotion of ICT in disaster prevention field

In addition to public networks for subscribed phones and cellular phones and exclusive lines, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications is now establishing a robust, congestion-free independent network called the "disaster prevention communications network" across the nation, prefectures and municipalities, to secure communications and collect and submit information promptly and steadily in the event of disaster.

The Ministry is promoting development and enhancement of the disaster prevention communication network while setting up effective measures in the event of network interruption, including activities of the Conference of Emergency Communications.

6. Promotion of content policy

Under the basic policy of market expansion in the content field as part of its efforts for strengthening the capacity for growth and international competitiveness of Japan, Japan set forth the numerical target of "increasing the value of the content market to about 5 trillion yen within the next 10 years" in the "Basic Guideline for Economy and Fiscal Management and Structural Reform 2006" (cabinet decision in July 2006). Also, the "2007 Intellectual Property Promotion Plan (Headquarters for Intellectual Property Strategy in May 2007) listed "Making Japan a first-class global digital content super-power" as a main pillar of its efforts, and efforts toward collaboration between public and private sectors have been promoted.

In order to develop an environment for content production and distribution, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) has been (1) discussing rules and other issues concerning the use/distribution of content, (2) making efforts toward the development of a content-trading market, (3) considering the promotion of an appropriate broadcasting content trade, and (4) preventing illegal content on networks. In addition, the MIC has been making active efforts for IPTV and for improving international competitiveness of content.

7. Creation and fostering of ICT venture businesses

ICT ventures create new businesses with innovative and indigenous technology and business models are expected to serve as the front-runners of innovation that enables the ICT industry of Japan to achieve further development in an era of increasingly fierce global competition.

The government of Japan advocates strengthening comprehensive support measures for research and development-oriented ventures, etc. as where should this close promotion of corporate activities such as research and development-oriented ventures in its "Third Science and Technology Basic Plan" and development of ventures that would create innovation in its "2007 Basic Policy for Economic and Financial Reform." The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) also takes measures to promote the creation and growth of ICT ventures in cooperation with related ministries and agencies, covering various aspects from fund supply, securing and development of human resources, and information provision, etc. In specific terms, in order to support the development of human resources in ICT ventures, the MIC has developed the "Manual for Formulation Business Plan and Venture Management" and the

"Management of Courses on Support for Formulation of Business Plan and Points to Remember in Supporting Ventures." It has also formulated the "ICT Venture Leadership Program" and the "Guidelines for Securing and Developing Human Resources in ICT Ventures."

8. Development of ICT personnel

(1) Development of advanced ICT personnel

Development of human resources with highly advanced knowledge and skills in the rapidly advancing ICT field is crucial for Japan to maintain its status as the world's leading ICT-based country and to maintain and improve international competitiveness. Thus, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) has been implementing a support scheme for ICT human resources development programs since fiscal 2001 to assist the quasi-public organizations and public-interest corporations which develop human resources in the information and communications field.

To deal with the urgent issue of securing human resources with research and development capabilities who can plan and promote innovation strategies in line with the latest technological trends and market needs, the MIC has held meetings of the Study Group on R&D Human Resources Development in the ICT Sector since November 2006 and the report of the Study Group was issued in June 2007. Furthermore, the Study Group on Development of Advanced ICT Human Resources was set up with the aim of conducting deliberations on fully-fledged measures for developing advanced ICT human resources, including advanced ICT human resources organizations and their functions that are required for strengthening international competitiveness, and the report was released in May 2008.

(2) Informatization of education and improvement of ICT media literacy

Since it is important for children who are the main players in the future of Japan, to become familiar with ICT at an early stage of their life, to improve their information utilization ability, and to build a society where new intellectual and cultural values are created, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) has formulated a manual that describes model plans for establishing networks in schools, entitled the "Manual for Installing School LAN" and posted it on its website.

In order to support ICT use in elementary and junior high-schools, the MIC has been conducting a large scale demonstration test, entitled the "Oasis Project." This project is to transmit content owned by the NHK, such as programs and video clips for schools, to elementary and junior high-schools throughout the country free-of charge, on a demand basis, for three years from November 2006, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

9. Promotion of telework

Telework is expected to provide a solution for various issues such as an ageing population with a declining birthrate, regional revitalization, reduction in environmental load, etc., while improving business efficiency and productivity in an effort to strike a proper work-life balance. The government of Japan raised the target for a telework population accounting for 20% of the working population by 2010 in the Telework Population Doubling Action Plan. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) also has been making a concerted effort to promote telework, in cooperation with relevant ministries and agencies. Specifically, working with the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the MIC started "demonstration experiments on telework model projects" and also implemented pioneering telework system model experiments to verify and present the various effects of telework on society.

10. Dealing with global warming issues in the ICT field

As global warming issues have become increasingly serious in recent years, ICT is expected to contribute greatly to the realization of a safe and secure society, improvement of convenience, and revitalization of regional economies, as well as to present a solution for global warming issues through more efficient business operations. On the other hand, consideration for global warming issues is increasingly necessary due to an increase in power consumption as a much higher number of ICT devices is in use and more functions are attached to them. In response to these circumstances, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) has convened meetings of the Study Group on ICT Policy for Addressing Global Warming since September 2007 and the Study Group released its report in April 2008. Now, based on the report, the MIC will contribute to the development of international standards for the ITU, etc., toward the establishment of an international index for the effect of ICT on CO_2 reduction and to implement effective evaluations, and will conduct discussions about support measures to promote further Åeenvironment'-conscious efforts in the home.

11. Promotion of ICT use for medical care

In the medical practice- in Japan, medical malpractice caused by the increased burden on medical professionals has been frequently reported. The burden of national health costs is expected to increase rapidly along with the advancement of an aging population and preventive measures for lifestyle-related diseases are increasingly necessary.

With the aim of contributing to solutions for these issues, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) has been conducting demonstration tests since 2008 toward building a foundation for the provision of seamless medical care among medical institutions and for the use of health information, which would contribute to daily measures for the promotion of health through the effective use of personal health data, in cooperation with Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. Recognizing the shortage of doctors in regional areas, the MIC and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare have jointly convened the "Panel on Telemedicine Promotion Measures" since March 2008, with the aim of studying the possible use of telemedicine technologies to enhance medical care in regional areas as well as measures to promote such use.