

Chapter 5

Outlook for Information and Communications Policies

Section 1

New Economic Growth through ICT

1. Promotion of a national strategy

In January 2001, the government enacted the the Basic Act on the Formation of an Advanced Information and Telecommunications Network Society and established the Strategic Headquarters for the Promotion of an Advanced Information and Telecommunications Network Society (hereinafter referred to as the IT Strategy Headquarters), with the goal of swiftly and thoroughly introducing measures for the formation of an advanced information and telecommunications network society.

Since then, the government has formulated strategies and priority policy programs as needed, including the January 2001 “e-Japan Strategy” aimed at “making Japan the world's most advanced IT nation within five years,” and the July 2003 “e-Japan Strategy II” with the aim of “realize an energetic, worry-free, exciting and more convenient society through the utilization of IT.”

In May 2010, the IT Strategy Headquarters formulated a New Strategy in Information and Communications Technology with the goal of establishing a society of popular sovereignty, comprising the three main points of 1)“realisation of e-Government ”, 2) “re-bonding local communities” and 3)“creation of new markets and international expansion.”

2. Promotion of a new economic growth strategy vision (the Haraguchi Vision)

In December 2009, Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications Kazuhiro Haraguchi unveiled the Haraguchi Vision composed of two elements, “promotion of “Midori no Bunken Kaikaku” policy-Growth Strategy from the region” (which aims to promote local sovereignty throughout society) and “the ICT Restoration Vision-Investment in Human Value-” (with the goal of realizing sustainable economic growth through the utilization of ICT.)

In addition, the following initiatives are being implemented.

- (1) In order to contribute to finding solutions to the various economic and social issues being faced by Japan and many other countries through the effective use of ICT. October 2009, the MIC inaugurated an ICT Policy Task Force for a Global Era in order to investigate new ICT policies. In May 2010, a meeting of the Task Force summarized the basic policies aimed at establishing a New Broadband Super Highway (Hikari-no-michi).
- (2) In December 2012, the MIC opened the Forum to Consider the State of the Protection of Citizen’s Rights in the Future ICT Field in order to study the state of the protection of citizens rights, including the Right of Free Speech, in the ICT field which is a fundamental infrastructure of democracy.
- (3) In order to clarify the direction of next-generation cloud technology, while comprehensively investigating the various issues concerning the development of cloud network technology, the MIC held the Smart Cloud Study Group starting in June 2009, and in May 2010 completed and presented a final report.
- (4) Starting in April 2010, the MIC is opening a "Council on the Brain and ICT" in order to examine the crossover field of brain research and ICT, which is expected to be implemented in the form of an information and communication network offering support for disabled persons and the elderly, flexible response to unforeseen circumstances and low energy consumption requirements.

3. Promotion of reform in communications and broadcasting fields

So as to clarify and streamline the communications and broadcasting fields to better adapt to the progress of digitalization, the legal systems governing communications and broadcasting were overhauled for the first time in 60 years, with the systems governing various types of broadcast formats integrated into a comprehensive system and the system governing radio station licensing and other broadcasting accreditation given increased flexibility, and the Act Concerning Partial Revision of the Broadcast Act was submitted to the 174th Diet session.

Main particulars of the reform

(1) Revisions of the Broadcast Act	(2) Revisions of the Radio Act
1. Clarification, streamlining and greater flexibility of the systems governing broadcasting activities	1. Development of a system for radio stations conducting both transmissions and broadcasts
2. Legal enshrinement of the principle of mass media decentralization	2. Expansion of radio stations not requiring licenses
3. Securing the safety and reliability of broadcasting	3. More comprehensive licensing of cellular phone base stations
4. Public announcement of the classification of programs broadcast	(3) Revisions of the Telecommunications Act
5. Explanation of the conditions for providing paid broadcasts	1. Expansion of conflict mediation functions
6. Development of a system for arbitration and mediation in cases of conflicts over re-broadcasting agreements	2. Establishment of a interconnection accounting related to Type II specified operators

4. Bolstering competitiveness and support for international expansion

The ICT industry accounts for about 10% of Japan's nominal GDP and, as such, is the largest industry. Its contribution ratio to real GDP growth is high as well, and it is seen as a vital strategic industry for our nation's future economic growth.

In the ICT Policy Task Force / Working Group on Bolstering Competitiveness, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications considered measures to promote global deployment through an "All-Japan" system bringing together content businesses, manufacturers and other ICT-related enterprises, and interim results were compiled in May 2010.

Also, the MIC has been implementing the Advanced ICT Project for International Expansion since 2009 to speed up the international expansion of ICT in three vital areas while promoting comprehensive policies to strategically move forward with internationally expanding into new fields using the high-level of ICT infrastructure in Japan. The Project is composed of three parts, (1) the Ubiquitous Alliance Project (a project to construct model systems in vital ICT areas in developing countries), (2) an advanced ICT validation testing project, and (3) a project to promote consolidation of ICT utilization rules (Cyber Special District project).

5. ICT productivity acceleration program

In order to realize the improvement of productivity through the use of ICT, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications is cooperating and collaborating with related organizations to promote the penetration of ASP / SaaS and provide support for the rapid implementation of new ICT systems by venture businesses, along with other efforts.

6. Support for 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 MIC 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. For ICT venture businesses that have just recently been launched, measures include debt guarantees provided through NICT (the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology) and financial support in the form of tax incentives (the Angel Tax, etc.)

Section 2

Development of Information and Communications Policies

1. Development of telecommunications policy

(1) Establishment of fair competition rules

A. New competition promotion program 2010

In response to the change in the market environment along with the advancement of broadband and IP networks, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) formulated a New Competition Promotion Program 2010 in September 2006, which is a roadmap for the development of rules for fair competition to be implemented by the beginning of the 2010's in the telecommunication field and also a concrete implementation plan for the Process Program for the Reform of the Communications and Broadcasting Field (September 2006) in the ICT sector. The purposes of Program 2010 include promotion of further competition in the telecommunication market and protection of user benefits. Program 2010 was revised in October 2007 and again in June 2009, and MIC is presently committed to its steady promotion.

B. Promotion of competition in the mobile communications market

The MIC established the Mobile Business Study Group in January 2007, aiming for economic vitalization and for the improvement of user benefits through the growth of new mobile business and the final report was released in September 2007. Based on the final report, the MIC announced the Mobile Business Revitalization Plan in September 2007, which was formulated as a roadmap for programs to be implemented by the target year of 2011.

In addition to formulating the Guidelines for the Operation of the Type II Specified Telecommunications Equipment Systems in March 2010, the MIC held a public hearing in April 2010 with concerned parties on the state of the SIM lock for cellular phone units. Taking user demands into account, cellular phone enterprises came to a reasonable consensus on a policy of releasing SIM locks voluntarily, and the MIC is scheduled to draw up guidelines on the release of SIM locks in the near future.

C. Review of universal service system

Based on the report of the Study Group of the Future Visions on the Universal Services System compiled in December 2007, with regard to the review of universal systems responding to IP telephony, the MIC made inquiries to the Information and Communications Council in April 2008 and received a report in December 2008.

In order to respond to the issues that may arise with the advancement of IP telephony and in view of achieving stable operation of the system, the report introduced concepts of the institutional review during 2009 and 2011: (1) although it is appropriate to basically continue the operation of the existing systems, (2) cost accounting modification is desirable so as to add the number of lines which have been switched from subscription lines to optical IP phones to the number of subscription lines, while following the existing cost accounting method. Based on this report, the MIC revised government order concerning the modification of the cost accounting method (above (2)) in May 2009.

D. Consideration for enhancement of platform collaboration

The MIC set up the Study Group on Communications Platform in February 2008 with the aim of considering issues involved in developing a market environment and future visions to enhance collaboration of platform functions essential for smooth distribution of contents applications through the broadband network and to create new business, and a report was compiled in January 2009.

E. Assessment of competition in the telecommunications Sector

In order to ensure accurate tracking of the status of competition in the increasingly complex telecommunications sector, and reflect this status in policies, the MIC has been implementing the Competition Assessment of the Telecommunications Industry since fiscal 2003.

(2) Increasing sophistication of networks, etc.**A. Promotion of increasing sophistication of networks**

In order to address the issue of “IPv4 address exhaustion” in the Internet infrastructure that supports Japan’s society and economy, in February 2009 the MIC opened the Study Group concerning the Improved Use of IPv6 on the Internet in order to secure the use environment for the Internet and for the purpose of studying concrete measures to help promote the spread of IPv6 from the viewpoint of further increasing the benefit of the Internet. A second interim report was compiled and released in March 2010.

B. Proper management of IP addresses / domain names

Currently, the private nonprofit organization ICANN is in charge of the extremely important task of appropriate management and coordination of the IP addresses and domain names essential to Internet use on a worldwide scale, so as to prevent duplication and other problems. Starting in November 2009, ICANN has been accepting registration of internationalized top-level domain by country. In Japan, appropriate domain names were discussed by the Information and Communications Council, and in July 2009 the domain “.Japan” was agreed upon. It was also decided that the administrator and operator of this domain should be selected from among private enterprises, and further considerations are underway in the privately established Japan Internet Domain Name Council.

(3) Dispute settlement between telecommunications business operators

The Telecommunication Business Dispute Settlement Commission is endowed with the following four functions: (1) to implement procedures for mediation and arbitration among telecommunications business operators, (2) to implement procedures for mediation and arbitration regarding radio station establishment, etc. (3) to conduct investigation and submit reports on orders and awards made by the prime minister when consulted, and (4) to make the necessary recommendations to the MIC on the development of rules, etc. concerning the items within its vested powers. Besides these functions, the Commission has set up a consultation desk for telecommunication business operators to offer advice and answer questions on connections and issues among telecommunication business operators.

2. Development of broadcast policy**(1) Promoting the transfer of broadcasting from analog to digital format**

Terrestrial analog broadcasting will end and be completely replaced by a terrestrial digital service by July 24, 2011. Terrestrial digital TV broadcasting was launched in the three largest metropolitan areas, Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya, in December 2003, and in December 2006, the service was started in all prefectural capitals. As of the end of March 2010, about 48.35 million households (about 97.5% of all households) have access to digital services, and as of the end of April 2010, the number of shipments of terrestrial digital receivers constitutes about 75.90 million sets. The number of households with cable TV connections capable of receiving terrestrial digital broadcasts is 24.06 million (as of the end of March 2010.)

In addition, branches of “Digi-Support” (the MIC Television Recipient Support Center), which offers support and consultations to television viewers regarding the transition to digital broadcasting, have been opened in every prefecture, and are helping promote the transition to an all-digital terrestrial broadcasting system.

(2) Other broadcasting policies

Japan’s satellite broadcasting has acted as a pioneering technologically advanced medium, providing various special broadcasting services and high-definition TV programs. The cumulative total of shipments of special satellite receivers (for both BS and 110 CS digital broadcast) came to about 65.35 million sets (as of the end of March 2010), and the number of households connected to special satellite broadcasting is about 21.98 million (as of end of March 2009).

3. Development of radio policy

(1) Summary of radio policy

A. Promotion of effective frequency usage

As frequencies are a limited resource, it will be necessary to promote newly effective frequency usages such as the white space usage to ensure that this resource serves to increase people's benefit. Since December 2009, the MIC has held a Round-Table Conference, titled "Examination Team for New Radio Usage Vision," for initiating studies on new and more effective frequency usages.

B. Efforts for transfer and reallocation of spectrum and development of the radio usage environment

Since October 2008, the MIC has held a Spectrum Policy Round-Table Conference for studies on the future vision and possible uses of radio communication systems and services in the 2010s and published the results as the Spectrum Policy Round-Table Conference Report: Strategy for Generation of Spectrum Business. Possible new applications harnessing wireless communication technology include systems and services such as non-colliding vehicles and comfortable, fully cordless living environments. It is estimated that the market for new spectrum-related services and systems could be worth 50 trillion yen by 2020.

(2) Efforts toward sophistication and diversification of radio usage

A. Advancement of mobile communication system and wireless access system

As of the end of March 2010, the number of cellular and PHS cellular phone units in Japan had reached 116.29 million, of which 3G (third-generation) "IMT-2000" mobile communication systems accounted for 95.4%. Currently, progress is being made toward standard adoption of the "3.9G" mobile communication system, more sophisticated than the 3G system, and throughout the world enterprises, etc. are moving toward the realization of full-scale adoption in 2010 or thereafter. Meanwhile, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is moving forward with standardization ahead of the adoption of the 4G system (IMT-Advanced), which achieves 100 Mbps when moving at high speeds and 1 Gbps at low speeds, around 2011, and the MIC is actively promoting efforts for research and development and international standardization with industry-academia-government cooperation.

With regard to broadband wireless access (BWA) systems, UQ Communications Co., Ltd. has been using mobile WiMAX to offer service in the 23 wards of Tokyo and Yokohama and Kawasaki cities since February 2009, with service expanding to the Tokyo-Nagoya-Osaka corridor in July 2009. The MIC began accepting applications for licenses to conduct regional WiMAX businesses at a municipal level in March 2008, and as of March 2010 has granted wireless station licenses to around 40 businesses, primarily cable TV operators, around one quarter of which have already begun commercial service.

B. Promotion of ITS

The MIC established the Study Group on Advancement of ITS Wireless Systems in October 2008 to further the advancement of wireless systems used in ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems) and to deliberate its vision for the utilization of the Wireless ITS Safe Driving Support System, its functions and required specifications and technological issues and promotional measures for its realization, and compiled a report in June 2009. As exemplified by VICS (Vehicle Information and Communication System) and ETC (electronic toll collection), ITS has become a vital part of Japan's infrastructure, offering solutions to issues in a wide range of sectors, and efforts are underway to promote its increased sophistication.

(3) Development of radio usage environment

A. Efforts concerning effects of radio waves on the human body and medical equipment

The MIC has conducted research on the effect of the radio spectrum on the human body to protect the human body from the effect of the radio spectrum. Using the research results and international guidelines as a reference, the MIC has established safety standards (Safety Guidelines for Use of Radio Waves) to be applied in Japan. The MIC also evaluates and analyzes domestic and international research on the effects of the radio spectrum on the human body, promotes studies by extracting research themes to be addressed by Japan, and has held meetings of the Committee on Bioelectromagnetic Environment since June 2008, with the aim of creating a society where people can use radio spectrum safely.

Furthermore, since concerns about the effects of cellular phones and other devices on implantable medical devices, such as cardiac pacemakers, have increased in recent years, the MIC has conducted studies on the effect of radio waves on medical equipment since FY 2000, and has amended the Guidelines to Prevent Effects of Electromagnetic Waves from Various Types of Equipment on Implantable Medical Devices (established in August 2005, revised in May 2009).


B. Measures for unnecessary radio waves

As electrical and electronic equipment become more widespread, there are growing concerns that the use of wireless is affected by electromagnetic interference from unnecessary radio waves emitted by various types of equipment and facilities.

The MIC has set up CISPR (*Comité International Spécial des Perturbations Radioélectriques*) within the Information and Communications Council, and in addition to contributing to discussions on international standards, has worked to promote the development of domestic standards.

C. Appropriate surveillance and supervision of radio waves and correct management of wireless stations

The MIC conducts investigations to immediately remove spectrum interference caused by illegal wireless stations that is affecting wireless communication designated as critical wireless communication, including communication related to telecommunications activities, broadcasting activities, the protection of life and property, the maintenance of order, meteorological activities, electricity supply and rail transport. Also, in cases where illegal wireless stations have been set up and have been conducting unlicensed operations, the MIC investigates, presses charges and takes corrective measures against stations that have committed violations.

Since FY 2006, the MIC has been implementing publicity and enlightenment campaigns to promote Radio Act and regulations concerning the utilization of radio waves for electronics retail stores and retailers of electromagnetic equipment and at the same time, has been implementing publicity and enlightenment campaigns to create awareness of the fact that the use of radio waves requires a license and that wireless equipment is required to bear an appropriate technology mark, .

Section 3

Establishment of a Safe and Secure Ubiquitous Network Society

1. Consumer administration in relation to telecommunications services

(1) Promotion of ICT services that reflect the public viewpoint

Due to new ICT services and the distribution of information through new technologies which has created a need to clarify relations between such services and intellectual property and other rights, the MIC has held the Study Group Concerning Various Problems with ICT Services Based on User's Viewpoints since April 2009, and the group compiled and released its first draft proposal in August 2009 and second draft proposal in May 2010. In April 2009, four issues were decided upon, namely (1) Internet map information services, (2) illegal music distribution, (3), services utilizing LifeLog, and (4) revision of guidelines for protection of personal information, and the results of deliberations on (1)(2) and (4) were released as a draft proposal. In May 2010, the results of deliberations on issue (3) and on two new issues identified after the release of the first draft proposal ((5) CGM [Customer Generated Media], such as SNS and blogs, and (6) safety and security measures to be implemented when information is transferred onto mobile computers) were released as a second draft proposal.

(2) Promotion of consumer protections in the telecommunications services sector

The MIC formulated the Guidelines Telecommunications Business Act Consumer Protection Rules in March 2004 with the goal of making consumers secure when using telecommunication services, and in April 2010 put them into effect in conjunction with the enactment of the Telecommunications Business Act. In the report of the Panel on the Telecommunications Service Users prepared in February 2009, it was proposed that inclusion of contact information and means of contact, in case of change or dissolution of contracts, in explanations when contracts for telecommunications services are concluded, and recommendation of a basic policy of tailoring solicitations to the individual characteristics of users, be added to these guidelines. In response to this proposal, the Ordinance for Enforcement of the Telecommunications Business Act was partially revised in July 2009, and the Guidelines revised as well.

(3) Dealing with illegal/harmful materials on the Internet

The Internet has penetrated Japan at a remarkable pace and has been used as a form of social infrastructure, serving as an indispensable part of people's lives. At the same time, the rapid penetration of the Internet has also generated negative effects, such as the transmission of harmful information.

The MIC has been taking actions to deal with these issues, including the establishment of a consultation center to contact regarding harmful information, and will continue to take further steps in the future.

(4) Measures against nuisance e-mails

A wide variety of measures have been taken against nuisance e-mails, including the passage of the Act on Regulation of Transmission of Specified Electronic Mail and various voluntary efforts by the telecommunications sector. However, nuisance e-mail transmission methods have become increasingly devious and cunning, and the MIC is taking a wide variety of steps in response to the appearance of new problems such as the increasing number of nuisance e-mails sent from overseas. At the 171st session (2009 ordinary Diet session), the Establishment of Consumer Agency and Consumer Committee Act (Act No. 48 of 2009) was passed and went into effect on September 1.

With the establishment of the Consumer Affairs Agency and The Consumer Commission, the relevant regulations have been modified as well to give the Consumer Affairs Agency co-jurisdiction regarding the Law on Specified Electronic Mails as well. In line with this, the Law Enforcement Regulations Concerning the Guidelines for Sending of Special E-mail, etc. (2002 Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Act No. 66) has been revised as well.

(5) Protection of personal information in the telecommunications field

In order to improve the benefit of telecommunications services and protect the rights and interests of users, the MIC formulated the Guidelines for Protecting Personal Information in the Telecommunications Sector and Their Interpretation in August 2004, and enforces them. In August 2009, based on the initial recommendations of the Study Group Concerning the Various Problems with the ICT Service Based on User's Viewpoints, the Guidelines and Interpretation were revised in December 2009.

In August 2004, the MIC also formulated the Guidelines concerning the Protection of Personal Information of Broadcast Receivers (2004, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Bulletin No. 696), enacted April 2005. These Guidelines were revised in July 2007 with consideration for developments since enactment, and revised again in September 2009 based on the partial revision of the Basic Policy on the Protection of Personal Information (April 2004, Cabinet Decision).

2. Promotion of information security policy

(1) Information security measures of the government

Japan's efforts for information security issues have been enhanced, with the setting up of the National Information Security Center (NISC) in the Cabinet Office in April 2005 and the establishment of the Information Security Council in the IT Strategy Headquarters in May 2005. In February 2009, the NISC developed the Second National Strategy on Information Security covering the three years from 2009 to 2011 in a Security Policy Meeting. Also, based on this plan, the Secure Japan 2009 promotion program was finalized in June 2009.

In May 2010, the same Security Policy Meeting decided on the Information Security Strategy for the Protection of Citizens, aimed at responding effectively to environmental changes due to the increasing diversification, sophistication and complexity of information security. This is a comprehensive strategy for the four years from 2010 through 2013, incorporating the Second-Term Information Security Basic Plan. The NISC plans to release the Secure Japan 2010 annual plan which will be based on this strategy.

(2) Realization of an environment for safe and secure use of the Internet

Based on the Second Information Security Basic Plan, etc., the MIC has been making efforts toward responding to diversified products and the improvement of human and organizational capacities that would lead to the enhancement and increased reliability of networks which, from the standpoint of a competent ministry in the ICT field, is one of the most important infrastructures, in order to develop an environment responsive to the increasing diversification of network-connected objects, and where people can use information and communications networks safely.

(3) Ensuring safety and reliability in the telecommunications services

In order to ensure the safety and reliability in the telecommunications services, the MIC has taken steps such as legal ordainment of the technical standards for equipment, imposition of requirements for selection of chief telecommunications engineers and reporting of maintenance provisions, and promotion of utilization of the guidelines "Standards for Security and Reliability of Information and Communication Networks" (1989, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications Proclamation No. 73). In addition, in response to the recommendations of the Security Policy Meeting (office: Chief Cabinet Office, Information Security Center), the MIC supported the formulation of the Safety Criteria for Ensuring Information Security in the Telecommunications Sector and promotes their adoption by telecommunications operators.

While the conversion of networks to IP format progresses, transmission interference incidents are increasing in number, scale and duration. In response, the MIC held the IP Network Management Human Resources Study Group in April 2008, and compiled and released a final report in February 2009.

At disaster sites, the current public announcement system used by police, fire department, emergency rescue, etc., is an audio broadcast system, but in order to share accurate information such as on the status of affected areas, there is a need for a more flexible and dependable means of transmitting visual images.

To meet this need, in April 2009 the MIC advised the Information and Communications Council, on the basis of the Council's June 2007 findings, regarding the technological prerequisites for a mobile public disaster broadcast system, recommending the introduction of an independently operated broadband transmission-capable transmission system in order to realize a safe and secure society. Deliberations in the Council began in May 2009, and findings were released in March 2010. Based on these findings, in April 2010, proposals for revisions of relevant laws aimed at developing an environment conducive to a public broadband disaster broadcast system was presented to the Radio Regulatory Council.

(4) Safety assessment and promotion of advancement of cryptographic technology

In order to ensure information security, which is indispensable for network-based social and economic activities, it is essential to utilize safe and well-designed cryptographic technology.

To this end, CRYPTREC (Cryptography Research and Evaluation Committees), composed of the CRYPTREC Advisory Committee which is jointly constituted by the MIC and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI); the Cryptographic Technique Monitoring Subcommittee, and the Cryptographic Module Subcommittee, which are jointly constituted by the National Institute of Information and Communication Technology (NICT) and the Information-technology Promotion Agency, Japan (IPA), publicly invited ciphers, evaluated them objectively, and decided and publicized, in February, 2003, a list of recommended ciphers that should be recommended for their level of safety and superior design.

The CRYPTREC Advisory Committee evaluates cryptographic technology for use in e-government, etc., and in March 2009 compiled a list of publicly invited ciphers for updating of the e-Government Recommended Ciphers List, an FY 2002 list of ciphers that should be recommended for use in e-government procurement.

Section 4

Promotion of Informatization of Administrative Services

1. Realization of e-government

(1) Promotion of broad-based optimization of governmental duties and systems

Regarding the promotion of e-government, the MIC has thus far been implementing a wide variety of measures based on the e-Government Construction Program (determined by the Liaison Conference for Chief Information Officers (CIO) of Respective Ministries in July 2003, partially revised June 2004). In addition to optimization of the duties and systems of various individual government agencies, in the future further broad-based optimization of the functioning of the entire government will be sought. In order to clarify the future vision in this regard, and deliberate on issues and initiatives surrounding the development of a shared governmental platform serving as the base for integration and centralization of governmental information systems and coordination of data, since June 2009 the MIC has held the Study Group on the Status of Development of Governmental Information Systems, and compiled and released interim results in August 2009 and a final report in April 2010.

In terms of procurement procedures (excluding public works projects, etc.), with regard to an electronic system for bid tendering and bid opening procedures, currently each individual government agency develops and operates such systems as needed. In order to optimize systems and procedures for governmental procurement (excluding public works projects), based on the Basic Policy (August 2008, decided by the Governmental Liaison Committee for the Promotion of Adoption of Electronic Government Procurement Procedures [excluding public works projects]), the Plan for Optimization of Procurement Procedures and Systems was formulated and decided by the Liaison Conference for Chief Information Officers (CIO) of Respective Ministries in August 2009. Henceforth, existing electronic bid tendering systems independently maintained and operated by individual governmental agencies for bid tendering and bid opening procedures will be abolished, and operations progressively transferred to a centrally managed and operated electronic procurement system.

(2) Efforts to promote balanced development of online services

While past e-government initiatives have greatly expanded the transfer of administrative procedures to an online format, to the extent that as of the end of FY 2008, online application, reporting etc. is now possible for 92% of the targeted procedures, there are still a large number of procedures where online applications are not taking place or their use is extremely limited.

Based on the Action Plan for Online Usage Expansion (decided by the IT Strategy Headquarters in September 2008), steps are being taken to promote online usage by boosting the benefits and improving the user-friendliness of online procedures, particularly those widely conducted by Japanese citizens, as well as revising strategies for online procedures that are hardly used and have little hope of improvement, including shutdown of systems, taking into account the cost-benefit analysis and existence or non-existence of alternative procedures.

2. Realization of e-local governments

(1) Construction of an e-local government infrastructure

e-local governments aim to upgrade administrative services and simplify and streamline administration through the use of ICT. In the future, with the advancement of ICT utilization including ASP and SaaS technology, even in local governments that have independently constructed and operate their own information systems, there will be a demand for a paradigm shift from “possession” to “utilization” of ICT, and construction and operation of more efficient information systems making active use of recent technological innovations in the ICT field, such as cloud computing, etc.

(2) Local government clouds

In order to promote the further centralization and shared utilization of local government information systems through construction of community clouds on the Local Government Wide Area Network (LGWAN), since FY 2009 the MIC has implemented the Local Government Cloud Development Verification Project, and is striving for more user-friendly administrative services and reduced costs. Based on the results of the verification project currently underway, the MIC will promote measures on a nationwide basis, such as construction of a comprehensive promotional framework through conclusion of agreements between central and local government, and formulation of standard specifications to ensure effective linkage between organizations operating local government clouds and governmental systems, etc., so as to advance the construction of an e-local government infrastructure.

(3) Thorough personal information protection and information security measures in e-local governments

Personal information protection and information security measures are vital issues concerning the realization of e-local governments. All prefectures and municipalities in Japan had already passed personal information protection ordinances by the end of FY 2005. Henceforth, the MIC will continue providing support for the implementation of information security measures by local governments, and providing advice and guidance as needed to local government CEPTOAR (Capability for Engineering of Protection, Technical Operation, Analysis and Response), a council engaged in sharing of information on security-related topics among local governments. Also, in line with the Second-Term Information Security Basic Plan formulated in February 2009 and the Information Security Strategy for the Protection of Citizens formulated in May 2010, the MIC is taking steps aimed at ensuring that appropriate information security measures are taken in all local governments, no matter how small.

3. Utilization of the Resident Registration Network System

As a local government system, the Resident Registration Network System aims to connect Basic Resident Registers of communities in a network, facilitating the supply of personal identification information (name, address, date of birth, gender, resident registration code, and any changes to this information) to administrative bodies, as well as procedures related to the Basic Resident Register extending across municipal borders.

The amount of information provided to administrative bodies by the Resident Registration Network System is steadily increasing year by year, with 110 million units of information provided between August 2008 and July 2009. For example, with regard to as yet un-integrated pension records, cross-checking to confirm addresses using the personal identification information in the Resident Registration Network System is helping to restore pension records. Also, sparing no effort to protect personal information, the MIC has been taking steps such as reconfirming checklists for every municipality, as per the recommendations of the Resident Registration Network System Review Committee in place since September 2002.

4. Public Certification Service for Individuals by local governments

As it is difficult to verify authorship of digital documents published on the Internet, dangers including impersonation, unauthorized modification and denial of transmission exist. Since January 2004, the Public Certification Service for Individuals by Local Governments has been offered, based on the Law Concerning Local Government Certification Services related to Electronic Signature (Law No. 153, 2002), so as to promote the availability of online administrative procedures, overcome said problems and realize e-government at both the national and local levels.

The electronic certification provided through the Public Certification Service for Individuals is valid for three years, with a 500-yen fee for issuance, and is encoded on an IC card such as a Resident Registration Network System card issued to the user after a thorough confirmation of the individual's identity at the municipal office. Procedures, such as applications, that can be conducted using the Public Certification Service for Individuals include filing tax returns, applying for property deeds, etc., and as of April 2009 these procedures were being conducted in 13 government agencies, the 47 prefectures of Japan, and some municipalities.

Section 5

Improving Citizens' Standard of Living through Development of ICT Infrastructure and Promotion of ICT Utilization

1. Elimination of the digital divide and utilization of broadband infrastructure

(1) Efforts to eliminate the digital divide

With the goal of eliminating broadband-zero areas and areas with poor cellular phone reception by the end of FY2010, and otherwise laying out concrete steps to bridge the digital divide the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) set up the Strategic Council on Bridging the Digital Divide in October 2007 and a final report was prepared and announced in June 2008.

Based on this, the Strategy on Bridging the Digital Divide was formulated as a master plan.

As of the end of March 2009, the estimated broadband service area coverage rate of households stands at 98.8%, and the super-high-speed broadband service area coverage rate of households at 90.1%. With regard to the elimination of the remaining broadband-zero areas (1.2%, or 640,000 households, as of the end of March 2009), as it is difficult to rely solely on private operators to develop a broadband infrastructure, in the first supplementary budget for FY 2009 provisions are made for approximately 340 projects requested by municipalities (at a total project cost of about 230 billion yen), and with implementation of development of FTTH, etc. through public development methods, broadband access is expected to be newly provided to approximately 340,000 households. As for the remaining 300,000 or so households, the majority are expected to be covered through expansion of the business area of private-sector enterprises, but certain areas suffer from inefficient development and as there are currently no requests for development support from the municipalities in question, for the time being they are thought best addressed through satellite broadband. Through such efforts, broadband-zero areas could potentially be eliminated before the end of FY 2010. While such broadband development efforts are moving forward on a nationwide basis, there remain issues to be overcome, such as inadequate utilization of broadband (the optical broadband utilization rate stands at approximately 1/3), etc.

The MIC also established the Study Group to Promote Development of Cellular phone Coverage Areas in March 2009 with the aim of reviewing the goals for further coverage area development for cellular phone services and considering specific measures based on the Strategy on Bridging the Digital Divide. A final report was compiled and released in March 2010.

(2) Verification of the “Broadband Open Model”

In order to contribute to the resolution of challenging regional issues by harnessing the power of optical broadband, which can provide high-speed, high-capacity communications at relatively low cost regardless of distance, in November 2009 the MIC launched the The Optical Broadband Utilization Study Team. This study team compiled and released an interim report in April 2010, outlining the construction of a Broadband Open Model incorporating cloud services into an optical broadband system and measures for its utilization for lower-cost, higher quality local government, education, challenged people's issues and the medical field. The MIC plans further deliberations on uses for the Model as the FY 2010 budget allows.

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

Acknowledging that correcting the regional divide is an urgent issue, the MIC is committed to developing support systems aimed at construction of successful models through such steps as dispatching regional informatization advisors and setting up the Portal Site for Community Revitalization through ICT (jointly with the Association for Promotion of Public Local Information and Communication).

Also, starting in FY 2010, the MIC is building on the past results of the Regional ICT Utilization Model Construction Project to formulate regional ICT human resources cultivation strategies, utilization procedures and ICT system standard specifications for application to broad-based partnerships between local governments. In addition to promoting the smooth and efficient adoption of ICT by highlighting the benefits of economies of scale to be achieved by such a partnership and outlining technological and other procedures for introduction, the MIC is continuing to implement the Regional ICT Utilization Model Construction Project as a means of achieving broad-based cost reductions at both the national and local government levels.

Also, in conjunction with APPLIC (The Association for Promotion of Public Local Information and Communication), the MIC is promoting the widespread adoption of Standard Specifications for Regional Information Platforms, rules to be applied to various individual systems, in order to facilitate linkups of regional information systems.

3. Promotion of barrier-free information

(1) Promotion of a universal usage environment

With respect to web accessibility, to ensure accessibility to website in the public sector for everyone including elderly and challenged people, since December 2005 the MIC has been promoting the active use of the Operational Models for Government Website for Everyone that offer specific operational models for maintaining and improving web accessibility. In FY 2010, these operational models will be subject to revision on the basis of recent standardization trends. 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 2007.

In addition, through the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology, the MIC has been providing support for research and development of communications and broadcasting technology for the elderly and physically challenged so as to further the development of systems, devices and services for these segments of the population. Funding support is provided as necessary to corporations engaged in providing or developing communications and broadcasting services for the physically challenged (such as telephone relay services for the hearing challenged, etc.)

4. Promotion of content policy

Under the basic policy of market expansion in the contents field, as part of Japan's efforts for strengthening the capability for growth and international competitiveness by evolving into an intellectual property powerhouse, the Intellectual Property Strategic Program 2010, (adopted by the Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters in May 2010) designated "promoting a growth strategy based on enhancement of the content market" as a main pillar of its efforts, with these efforts to be pursued jointly by the private and public sectors. Within the Panel on International Competitiveness, part of the ICT Policy Task Force for a Global Era, the MIC has been deliberating on measures to promote content policy, and an interim report was compiled and released in May 2010. Concrete measures are scheduled for implementation henceforth.

Recognizing the fact that promotion of secondary use of broadcast content via the Internet, etc., necessitates major reductions in the time and expense of rights handling, the MIC is conducting verification experiments in conjunction with video content rights management association ARMA on the integration of rights management inquiries and the realization of more efficient handling of unclear rights cases. In addition, the MIC formed a study group composed of relevant businesspeople and experts, which held deliberations on concrete measures toward the realization of more transparent and fair production and trade, and in February 2009 formulated and released the Guidelines for Regulation of Broadcast Content Production and Trade (with a second, revised version released in July 2009.) At present, these guidelines are being thoroughly explained to relevant parties at briefing sessions, etc. In addition, in March 2010 the MIC, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and METI held the Conference on Promoting the Use of Publications in a Digital Network Society bringing together a wide range of related parties to consider how to promote the use of publications in a digital network society.

5. Development of ICT personnel

(1) Development of advanced ICT personnel

In order for Japan to maintain its position as one of the world's top ICT nations and maintain and improve international competitiveness, it is necessary to cultivate ICT personnel with advanced knowledge and skill in the rapidly advancing ICT field. Since FY 2001, the MIC has been implementing the Support System for ICT Personnel Training Programs, which provides assistance and partial subsidization as needed to joint public-private ventures and public corporations, etc. that implement training programs for ICT personnel. The "Haraguchi Vision" announced in December 2009 sets a target of training 350,000 advanced ICT personnel by 2020.

Starting in FY 2010, the MIC is also implementing a program to promote "future schools," so as to extract and analyze technological ICT issues related to the classroom and work toward the construction of an ICT network environment conducive to "collaborative education" in which children teach and learn from one another.

6. Promotion of telework

“Telework” refers to a flexible work method that makes use of ICT and is not tied in to a work place or time, and is seen as a major contributor to realizing work-life balance, as a step to bring about greater business efficiency and productivity, and as a means of addressing issues such as work-life balance and fewer children and an aging population, revitalizing local communities, and reducing our impact on the environment.

The national government has set an Action Plan for Doubling the Teleworking Population (decided by a committee of government agencies related to telework promotion and approved by the IT Strategic Headquarters in May 2007), which sets a governmental target of doubling the number of teleworkers to 20% of the working population by 2010. The MIC is promoting the spread of telework by working as one unit with other related government agencies.

In addition to implementing Telework Adoption Diagnosis Program demonstration tests and advanced telework system model demonstration tests in fields such as specialized health guidance, manufacturing and environmental contribution, the MIC has made efforts to develop and verify new telework systems employing NGN (next generation networks) which contribute to expansion of the scope of telework application. Also, the MIC continues to implement fixed property tax reduction measures to encourage enterprises to develop telework environments and introduce telework-related equipment.

7. Promotion of ICT use for medical care

In the medical sector in Japan, malpractice caused by the increased burden on medical professionals is 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 to these issues, since FY 2009 the MIC has been conducting demonstration tests through the advanced use of ubiquitous network technologies, such as electronic tags for improving the safety of medical practices, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. The MIC has also been conducting three-year demonstration projects from 2008 to 2010 to build a foundation for health information utilization that would contribute to the provision of seamless medical care and to daily health promotion measures 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 rural areas, the MIC and the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare have jointly set up the Panel on Telemedicine Promotion Measures (jointly hosted by the prime minister and the minister of health, labor and welfare) since March 2008, with the aim of studying the possible use of telemedicine technologies to enhance medical care in rural areas as well as measures to promote such use. Based on the Panel’s interim report released in July 2008, the MIC implemented a telemedicine model project in FY 2008 and FY 2009, collecting evidence (scientifically backed data) on the safety and effectiveness of telemedicine. On the basis of discussions held in the Working Group on Telemedicine Promotion Measures, part of the ICT Policy Task Force for a Global Era division for investigating global issues, the MIC is pursuing further study on the nationwide diffusion and expansion of telemedicine, including use of the FY 2010 budget allocated for broad-based regional partnerships utilizing ICT to gather and accumulate further evidence and revise the outlook on telemedicine as a supplement to face-to-face treatment, expand the scope of application, and apply medical remuneration to telemedicine, etc.

Section 6

Dealing with Global Warming Issues in the ICT Field

1. Addressing environmental issues with ICT

In November 2009, the MIC inaugurated an ICT Policy Task Force for a Global Era in order to investigate new ICT policies so as to contribute to finding solutions to the various economic and social issues being faced by Japan and many other countries through the effective use of ICT. In the division of this task force dedicated to investigating global issues, investigations are carried out so as to overcome the regional and global issues that are facing countries, such as environmental problems and medical care problems, so as to make full use of Japan's outstanding ICT, and ensure Japan earns the trust of the global society as a bridge to the world. From December 2009 through March 2010, a Working Group on Environmental Issues was held under the auspices of this division with the aim of promoting "Green of ICT" and "Green by ICT," ICT-based "green decentralization reform," and international contributions, compromises and standardization efforts. This working group analyzed the key areas outlined below to gauge the impact of the ICT sector on climate change through 2020, and compiled a report in March 2010 which was reported to the division on investigating global issues in May 2010.

2. Promotion of increased penetration of energy-efficient household appliances

The Program to Promote the Spread of Green Home Appliances by Utilizing Eco-Points has been in effect since 2009 under the auspices of METI, the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) and the MIC, with the aims of promoting global warming countermeasures, stimulating the economy, and facilitating the wider use of televisions for terrestrial digital broadcasting. Specifically, the program encourages the replacement of various household appliances by awarding Eco-Points for the purchase of highly energy-efficient appliances (air conditioners, refrigerators, televisions for terrestrial digital broadcasting carrying four stars on their unified energy saving labels).

Section 7

Promotion of Research and Development (R&D)

1. Research and development strategy to enhance the international competitiveness of Japan

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) has been promoting R&D in accordance with the 3rd Science and Technology Basic Plan (Cabinet decision in March 2006) and the Sector-wise Promotion Strategy (Council for Science and Technology Policy, March 2006) formulated for the strategic prioritization of the plan. Considering the marked decline in Japan's international competitiveness in recent years, it is expected that a more competitive ICT industry will have a vital role to play in reviving the international competitiveness of the nation as a whole.

With this in mind, the MIC is making efforts to promote enhancement of Japan's international competitiveness and the quick resolution of social issues, in coordination with the government's overall science and technology policy and New Growth Strategy (Basic Plan) (December 2009 Cabinet decision), and in accordance with the Future Reform Policy for generation of new industry based on the main pillars of "Green Innovation" (aiming to realize a low-carbon society through improved energy efficiency of ICT systems and broader utilization of ICT) and "Life Innovation" (aiming to boost the benefit, safety and security of electronic services and foster the utilization of ICT in the healthcare, nursing care and health fields.)

(1) New-generation networks

The MIC has been intensively promoting research and development of the new-generation network technology. Specifically, the following are some examples of what has been undertaken: R&D concerning new-generation network infrastructure technology, R&D concerning next-generation photonic network technology, R&D concerning quantum information communications network technology, R&D on ubiquitous platform technology, and R&D concerning terahertz wave technology.

(2) Safe and secure ICT

In the area of ICT safety and security, the MIC promotes research and development activities to overcome various problems with ICT, including disaster prevention, the natural environment, and social welfare to realize a safe and secure society and to provide a dependable ICT infrastructure so that anyone can use ICT effectively. Specifically, R&D activities are being carried out in several areas, including space communication technology, remote sensing technology, information security technology.

(3) Universal communications

With regard to the field of universal communications, the MIC promotes research and development activities to realize communications technologies that promote intellectual creativity and communications technologies friendly to people, including the elderly and the challenged who can then overcome age, physical, language and cultural barriers through the use of the most advanced ubiquitous networks in the world. Specifically, the research and development activities being carried out include universal auditory/linguistic communications technology, technology for Super High Definition video and super reality communication technology through innovative three-dimensional video technology.

2. Development of a research and development environment

In order to promote the R&D strategy outlined above, the MIC has been making efforts to promote not only individual R&D programs, but also development of an R&D environment conducive to efficient and effective R&D bringing together all of Japan's available resources. Specifically, this entails the construction of the JGN2plus advanced R&D testbed network through the Strategic Information and Communications R&D Promotion Programme (SCOPE) and National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT).

Section 8

Promotion of International Strategy

1. Promotion of international policy

(1) Promotion of international development in the Asia-Pacific region

The MIC has been making various efforts concerning the promotion of international policy in the Asia/Pacific region, which include cooperation with the member countries of APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation), the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In 2010, Japan is the chair of APEC, and is scheduled to conduct a wide range of APEC-related high-level meetings including a summit of heads of state. These include the Meeting of Telecommunications and IT Ministers (TELMIN 8), to be held in Okinawa Prefecture in October 2010. Goals for TELMIN 8 include evaluation of the Universal Internet Access target set for 2010, promotion of ICT utilization to tackle the issue of climate change and address other issues through incorporation of cloud computing, and adoption of the Okinawa Declaration outlining measures for utilization of ICT during natural disasters.

(2) Promotion of international developments among international institutions and multiple nations (except for Asia-Pacific region)

In the ICT field, it is to be hoped that highly anticipated new products and services will be developed by a wide range of domestic and international operators under open specifications and offering users as broad a range of options as possible. To this end, it is essential to consider measures for promotion and dissemination of specifications that can be adopted as the de facto standard through designation by public bodies and acceptance by a large number of participants in the market.

In August 2009, the MIC advised the Information and Communications Council on standardization measures for integrated communications and broadcasting environments. In response, the Committee on Standardization Measures for Integrated Communications and Broadcasting Environments has been formed and is pursuing deliberations on a basic policy for promotion of standardization.

Meanwhile, the UN telecommunications organization ITU (International Telecommunications Union), composed of (1) the Radio-communication Sector (ITU-R), (2) Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) and the (3) Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D), is engaged in activities for standardization of frequency allotment and telecommunications technology and support for telecommunications sector development in developing countries. Japan has produced a larger number of ITU research subcommittee chairpersons and vice-chairpersons and research leaders within this organization, and is making active contributions through proposals for recommendations, etc.

(3) Promotion of international policy in bilateral relationships

For the purpose of facilitating sustainable growth through dialog between Japan and the United States, the Japan-US Economic Partnership for Growth was agreed at the Japan-U.S. summit meeting held in June 2001, and annual multifaceted discussions, including vice-ministerial-level economic talks, have been held under the auspices of various conferences on initiatives for regulatory reform and competition measures, etc.

As part of the eighth-year discussions on Japan-US regulatory reform and competition initiatives, petitions of demands on related topics were exchanged between the governments of the US and Japan in October 2008, followed by exchanges of opinions between working groups, and in July 2009, the compilation and release of a report.

The MIC engages in policy consultations with ministries and agencies responsible for information and communications from the EU, western countries, China, and India, etc. Also, the MIC is making active effort to conclude EPA (Economic Partnership Agreements).

2. Promotion of international cooperation

ICT networks have a vital role to play in economic development, job creation, and raising the standard of living for the general public, but developing nations are on the far side of an international digital divide. There is an increasing need for the development of global ICT networks that include developing nations as well.

The MIC is committed to providing support for the cultivation of human resources in the ICT sector and supporting international and regional organizations aimed at promoting global cooperation towards the elimination of this digital divide. In addition, the MIC makes contributions to sustainable development in the ICT sector in developing countries, through overseas development assistance (ODA) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) .

Section 9

Development of Postal Service Administration

1. Promotion of postal service administration

Japan started the privatization of its postal services in October 2007, and what had previously been a single company was divided into five separate companies. It has become apparent that this and other changes have led to a weakening of the postal service administration's operational foundations and a decline in the ability to offer the public convenient services. For this reason, in October 2009 the government decided the Basic Policy on Postal Reform by Cabinet decision, and determined to pursue full-fledged, sweeping postal reforms so as to "make the citizens' right to access the postal network, which is the common property of all citizens, and basic postal services such as mail delivery, postal savings and postal life insurance, available to all, consistently, in a manner that truly benefits users, and in an integrated fashion at post offices nationwide." In December 2009, a law was passed and enacted to freeze the sale of shares in Japan Post Holdings Co. Ltd and its banking and insurance units, and in April 2010, a postal reform bill was placed before the Diet which sets forth detailed reforms of the postal service administration and new regulations governing Japan Post Holdings Co. Ltd. These efforts are intended to ensure that postal reform proceeds so as to resolve the problems currently facing postal privatization and guarantee that the postal network can be maintained, basic services provided on a stable basis, and the rights of Japanese citizens protected in the future.

2. Outline of correspondence delivery system

The Law Concerning Correspondence Delivery Provided by Private-Sector Operators paved the way for private enterprises entering the corresponding delivery business, which had been monopolized by the state.

Correspondence delivery falls into two categories; general correspondence delivery and special correspondence delivery. Since the enforcement of the said law in April 2003, although none have entered the general correspondence delivery business, there are 317 business operators in the special correspondence delivery business as of the end of March 2010.

3. Promotion of new postal service administration

In response to the postal service privatization of October 2007 and emerging movements in the field of postal and correspondence delivery services, such as movements entailed by the enforcement of the postal reform law in the United States, the MIC established the Investigation Study Group for Reviewing Postal and Mail Delivery Services in February 2007 with the aim of reviewing the overall system for postal and mail delivery services after the postal service privatization. An interim report and final report were developed in November 2007 and July 2008, respectively.

The final report recommends an ideal future system to be realized in the medium and long term: a system whereby participating business operators are able to provide services using their own originality and ingenuity, and a new Postal Service Law integrates the Postal Law and Correspondence Delivery Law into a single law. In addition, it sets forth consideration of the scope and standards for universal postal service and new steps to achieve these as a measure requiring urgent consideration, along with utilization of postal networks and expansion of the scope of the correspondence delivery business.

With respect to the promotion of personal data protection, the MIC held meetings of the Study Group on Protection of Personal Information in the Correspondence Delivery Service Field and the Study Group on Protection of Personal Information in Postal Service Field from December 2006 to January 2007. Based on the deliberations of these study groups, the MIC formulated and announced the Guidelines for Personal Information Protection in the Correspondence Delivery Service Field and the Guidelines for Personal Information Protection in Postal Service Field in March 2008.