Introduction

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) has published the White Paper on Information and Communications in Japan each year since 1973. This year's edition is the 42nd edition of the White Paper. The objective of this report is to present the current state of information and communications in Japan and the trends in the nation's information and communications policy. The English version is an abridged version of the original Japanese version.

As shown on the next page, the White Paper consists of two main parts. Part 1 is a special theme that takes up the latest noteworthy developments in ICT, centered on Japan, and looks at future developments. Part 2 consists of Chapter 5, which provides a statistical look at the state of information and communications in Japan in the last fiscal year, and Chapter 6, which covers policy trends in the information and communications field during the last fiscal year.

The special theme in this year's White Paper is the paradigm shift — irreversible economic and social transformations — that is accompanying the permeation of ICT into all aspects of our lives on a global scale. The special theme looks at the progress of this paradigm shift and how it will develop in the future.

ICT is rapidly propagating around the world, as its capabilities have improved exponentially and its costs fallen. Accordingly, ICT is bringing massive disruptions to many areas beyond the ICT industry — other industries, societies as a whole, corporate business models, and individuals' lifestyles.

The shift to smartphones, the commodification of products, and enlarging markets in emerging nations are fundamentally changing conventional market competition approaches and profoundly impacting the competitiveness and business performance of individual corporations. Corporations, mostly overseas corporations, that have adapted to the landscape transformations are realizing greater returns. And in emerging nations, new corporations are rising up, exerting themselves in local markets, and eyeing expansion into overseas markets. Developing nations are undertaking initiatives to apply widespread ICT to solve various social issues.

The exponential growth in computer processing power, exemplified by Moore's Law, and the widespread deployment of M2M technologies will enable the real-time collection and storage of massive and varied data sets that, traditionally, have been difficult or impossible to use. The analysis of these data sets will power future predictions and inference of abnormalities, thereby enabling the provision of services tailored to the specific needs of individual consumers, greater efficiencies in administration and operations, and the creation of new industries.

The proliferation of smartphones and SNS is bringing huge changes to people's lifestyles and work styles, transforming how people interact with information, and producing new working arrangements. New waves of ICT, such as wearables and automotive ICT, will surely bring even further revolutions to people's lives.

Part 1, "The Global Paradigm Shift Caused by ICT," in this year's White Paper focuses on these ICT trends.