

Greetings for the New Year 2019 from the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications



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Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications

I wish you a Happy New Year.

In October last year, I had the honor of being appointed the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, and Minister of State for the Social Security and Tax Number System. The responsibilities of these positions are wide ranging, with many issues that relate closely to daily life, but I will work earnestly to meet the expectations of all citizens of Japan.

Enhancing ICT Infrastructure

Technologies like fifth-generation mobile communication systems (5G) and optical fiber are essential infrastructure for Society 5.0 and are the key to eliminating information disparity between urban and rural areas. We are working on the allocation of radio frequencies to expand 5G to all regions of Japan within two years, and preparing the budget to develop optical fiber infrastructure in all regions to make it available to all of Japan as quickly as possible. At the same time, we are revising the radio system to utilize radio frequencies more effectively, which includes a review of the frequency allocation system and fee structures.

Multi-lingual speech translation systems have already reached TOEIC 800 point levels for English, Chinese and Korean, so they are easy to use for daily conversation situations. We are continuing development and deployment so that it can be used with more languages and in more situations, to help in accepting foreign personnel, and in time for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020.

We also continue to promote R&D and standardization of advanced information and communications technologies, to strengthen use of IoT and AI in all industrial fields and to increase Japan's competitiveness in these industries. We are also actively working to introduce blockchain technologies, information trust functions, and a cashless economy, which are powerful forces for change in society.

As ICT continues to permeate our lives more broadly and deeply, society is increasingly vulnerable to threats such as cyber attacks. We are collaborating between government and private interests, on security measures for IoT and other devices that are potentially vulnerable, and at the same time, working to address social and consumer protection issues, toward a safe and secure ICT society.

Personnel development is also necessary for Society 5.0. We have multifaceted initiatives such as establishing "Community ICT Clubs" where children, students and others can learn programming and other skills, and regional human resource development to promote open data.

We are working to maximize utilization of ICT and realize a society in which each and every citizen can work and live in a manner

that is suited to them, without being restricted by where they live, whether urban or rural. One initiative is "Telework Days", which promotes implementation of telecommuting on a national scale, providing flexibility to those that want to work and also helping to resolve overcentralized conditions in Tokyo. Another initiative promotes environments such as satellite offices and mobile work, which help people to work at times and places of their choosing, while living in the area they desire.

In December of last year, new 4K8K satellite broadcasts began, providing vivid, highly realistic viewing. We are using this 4K8K technology, together with communications technologies such as 5G, for tasks such as remote operation of machinery and remote medicine. Such use of advanced ICT will create environments that enable people to work and receive the services needed in their lives anywhere in Japan.

The benefits of Society 5.0 must be available to everyone, regardless of ability, age or geographical region. To achieve this, we are working on ICT to support it, including enhancements to captioning, descriptive, and sign-language broadcasts, to realize a society in which everyone can enjoy a wealthy life.

Developing ICT Internationally

This growth in Japan is inextricably linked to the international community. I will also be a co-chair of the G20 Ibaraki-Tsukuba Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Digital Economy next June. We will be promoting international cooperation on policy on important global issues in the future, such as development and utilization of AI and promoting free flow of information. As part of this, we are creating an ICT global strategy to unify ICT R&D and implementation in society, together with development overseas. This will advance development in Japan while also contributing internationally.

We are also actively working on expansion of infrastructure and systems overseas to maintain growth and capture markets there, utilizing our strengths in areas such as telecommunications, broadcasting, postal infrastructure, radio systems, statistics, disaster management, and administrative consultation systems. We are contributing to regional revitalization by expanding broadcast content overseas, increasing foreign tourism in disaster-affected and other areas, and expanding sales channels for regional products.

I would like to wish you all the best in the New Year, and I pray for the health and great happiness of all of you.

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