Reflections on the Start of the New Year 2020

TAKAICHI Sanae
Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications

I wish you a Happy New Year.

In September last year, I was reappointed as Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications after a break of two years and one month. I am determined to work hard to address the issues that affect everyone in Japan by organically combining this ministry's wide range of policy resources, and this year I will continue to put every effort into carrying out my duties to the best of my ability.

Last year, tremendous damage was caused by a series of natural disasters including typhoons and heavy rainfall. I would like to express my condolences for the people who lost lives in these disasters and offer my heartfelt sympathy for those who were affected by them.

I believe that protecting the lives and property of citizens is our country's most important mission, and I will be sure to take safety and security into consideration in the planning and implementation of various policies. In addition, I will continue to develop new policies where necessary from the viewpoint of consumers.

To realize local communities that can benefit from technological innovations such as 5G, IoT and AI in the fields of medicine, welfare, education, local transportation, tourism, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, disaster prevention, administration service, and so on, we will promote the development of better ICT infrastructure and usage environments. To that end, we will promote early nationwide deployment of ICT infrastructure including 5G and optical fiber, and we will work on initiatives such as Local 5G that develop regional 5G utilization.

Also, by steadily enforcing the Telecommunications Business Act and SIM unlocking guidelines, which were revised last year, and by ensuring the appropriate conditions and fees for MVNOs (mobile virtual network operators) when using the network of MNOs (mobile network operators), we will promote fairer competition in the mobile market and the provision of mobile services that are easy for users to understand and more affordable. With regard to the rules of competition in the telecommunications sector, we will take necessary measures, including system development in accordance with the report submitted by the Information and Communications Council at the end of last year.

For people to safely enjoy the benefits of information and communication technology while ensuring sustainable economic and social development, it is vitally important that we ensure the security of cyberspace that underpins our society. We will steadily implement security risk measures including 5G and IoT, further strengthen the development of human resources for security, and develop safe and secure environments for the use of ICT.

In addition, based on discussions at the G20 and with Japanese organizations, we will play an active role in international collaboration initiatives in the ICT field, such as fostering international consensus on AI principles and data distribution. We will also actively contribute to studies being conducted at the Headquarters for Digital Market Competition to improve the business environment for digital platform providers. Furthermore, to enhance industrial competitiveness, we will promote Research and Development and standardization of cutting-edge information and communication technologies including quantum technology and AI as well as simultaneous translation.

Meanwhile, in order to implement digital government, it will be necessary for government agencies themselves to work on business reforms by increasing the use of ICT at both national and regional levels to improve the quality of administrative services and the efficiency of business. In addition to improving the government's information system environment that ensures information security, we will make things more convenient for Japanese citizens by reviewing the entire conventional business process including the digitization of administrative procedures. We will also consider how information systems and forms can be standardized between local organizations, and we will study security measures that facilitate further advances in cloud utilization while delivering greater efficiency in the operations of local organizations.

Finally, allow me to wish you all the very best for the year ahead.

1st January 2020