



Commemorating 50 years since the founding of ITU-AJ

Towards the Next 50 years!

Founded on September 1, 1971, the ITU Association of Japan (ITU-AJ) is commemorating its 50th anniversary with the publication of the 2021 autumn issue of *New Breeze*. We have reached this milestone through the kind support received from many people over the last half-century, and for this we are sincerely grateful.

On this memorial occasion, we are again reminded of our important role at ITU-AJ with a strong desire to take up the challenges of the next 50 years. This issue features a collection of 50th anniversary articles. Editors

The ITU Association of Japan (ITU-AJ) was founded in September 1971 with the aim of coordinating activities with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). This year marks our 50th anniversary, which could not have been possible without the support received from many parties and people including the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), our supporting members, and ITU-AJ employees. On this occasion, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to all concerned.

Our daily lives have changed a lot due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, lifestyles making good use of information and communications technology (ICT) such as teleworking, videoconferencing, and online learning have become commonplace in society. Thanks to progress in the digital transformation, ICT is becoming an even more important social infrastructure that should make great contributions to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. Needless to say, ITU activities such as management of spectrum and satellite orbits, standardization of telecommunications technologies, and support for the development of telecommunications in developing countries will become increasingly important in the years to come.

This is just a personal story, but when I was still a young man directly after entering the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, ITU-AJ publications such as “ITU and Japan” and “ITU Research” were used as kinds of textbooks on telecommunications policies.

I particularly remember the media theory of Dr. Junichi Hamada (then an assistant and associate professor at The University of Tokyo) and the institutional lecture of communications policy in the United States (Value Added Network, etc.) of Mr. Hideo Katsube (then at KDD).

My connection with ITU-AJ was later revived after becoming director of the International Policy Division just at the time that H.E. Mr. Yoshio Utsumi, then ITU Secretary-General, was pouring much effort into holding the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

Then, in 2007, when I was director-general of the International Affairs Department, I attended for the first time

a session of the ITU Council at ITU Headquarters in Geneva. It was so impressive for me that there were many participating countries assembled in a huge conference hall. And as part of daily meetings with some of the member states, I sometimes had a chance to visit a nearby Japanese restaurant where the batter of the tempura struck me as too thick! However, during the time that I was Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination, I attended the ITU 2010 Plenipotentiary Conference in Guadalajara, Mexico and came to realize that the quality of tempura in Geneva was actually quite high. (Incidentally, Japanese cuisine in Europe today is quite amazing to say the least.)

By chance, I recently had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Junichi Hamada (past President and Honorary Professor of The University of Tokyo) and Mr. Hideo Katsube (Chairman and CEO of Knowledge Company, Inc.), which brought back memories of the ITU-AJ publications that I used to read. And now I am writing this article. My experience have been like a well-made story, as if by fate!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ITU-related meetings have basically been held as videoconferences. However, strategically important issues that need be studied at ITU have been piling up such as the expansion of frequencies for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) toward 5G and 6G, IoT security management, and standardization of quantum key distribution (QKD) technology. Studies on these topics are steadily moving forward despite the ongoing spread of COVID-19 throughout the world. In June 2022, the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) is going to take place for the first time in ITU history on the African continent (Addis Ababa).

Japan, as one of the most active participants that has been supporting ITU activities and a member of the Council since 1959, is expected to make further contributions for ITU toward achieving SDGs through digital transformation initiatives. For its part, ITU-AJ will make an even greater effort to meet the expectations of everyone who considers ITU to be an important strategic forum. I look forward to your ongoing support and encouragement in the years to come.



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President of the ITU Association of Japan