Introduction

MIC has published the White Paper on Information and Communications in Japan each year since 1973. This year's edition is the 43rd 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 following pages, the White Paper consists of three main parts. Part 1 and 2 are special themes that revisit the progress of Japan's ICT industry and the increasing use and application of ICT, with the telecommunications liberalization in 1985 as a starting point, to gain perspective on a time axis that extends from the past, through the present, and into the future. Part 2 goes on to survey mid-to-long-term future prospects as ICT becomes fully interwoven into society. Part 3 consists of Chapter 7, which provides a statistical look at the state of information and communications in Japan in the last fiscal year, and Chapter 8, which covers policy trends in the information and communications field during the last fiscal year.

The year 2015 marks 30 years since the telecommunications liberalization in 1985, and interest has been building in ICT's past, include the course of the ICT industry's development, the transformations in the industry's structure, and past telecommunication policies and their outcomes. At the same time, our interest in the future is growing, especially with the opportunity provided by Tokyo being named the host city of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Attention is focusing on how the integration of ICT into all aspects of society can resolve future issues our country is facing; namely, dealing with a declining population and a super-aged society and revitalizing local economies. Another important issue continues to be the international expansion strategies of Japan's ICT industry, which is anticipating rapid growth in the markets of emerging nations.

Given this context, we decided that the special themes of this year's White Paper on Information and Communications in Japan would be to look back at the progress of Japan's ICT industry and the increasing use and application of ICT, with the telecommunications liberalization as a starting point, to gain perspective on a time axis that extends from the past, through the present, and into the future, as well as to examine mid-to-long-term future prospects as ICT becomes fully integrated into society while considering recent technological trends such as advances in big data applications and the Internet of Things (IoT).

In Part 1, which is entitled "Looking Back at ICT's Progress," we verify, from various angles, the growth of the ICT industry since the telecommunications liberalization and the increasing use and application of ICT. First, in Chapter 1, we examine the course the ICT industry's growth has followed since the telecommunications liberalization, what structural transformations the industry has experienced, and how the industry has contributed to economic growth and the lifestyles of citizens. Continuing on in Chapter 2, we explore how the use and application of ICT has penetrated individuals' lifestyles and the activities of enterprises. Through these verifications, we provide an outline of the past 30 years of ICT evolution and lay the groundwork for Part 2's analyses of new ICT trends and a future ICT vision.

In Part 2, which is entitled "Future Society Spearheaded by ICT," we survey how the further evolution of ICT will change society from three viewpoints — regions, lifestyles, and industry. First, in Chapter 3, we examine what role ICT can play in revitalizing local economies, which is positioned as a pressing current issue for the country. Continuing on in Chapter 4, we consider how new emerging ICT trends may change our daily lives especially from the point of view of consumers and ordinary citizens. In Chapter 5, we move ahead with considerations of what kind of developments the ICT industry will see in the future and what changes the economy will undergo as a result of ICT progress. Finally, in Chapter 6, we sketch an overall vision of how ICT will transform society in general as a recap of Part 2.