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TOPICS

Promotion of International ICT Policy

Current status of international ICT policy

Two steps are important in the formulation of international policy for the ICT field. One is the international coordination to enable each country to put in place a free market environment and system. The other is the international cooperation to eliminate the global digital divide as well as to contribute to the smooth information distribution.

These international coordination and cooperation steps will serve to build up win-win relationship among Japan and other countries.

Cooperation in Asia

As an example of ongoing cooperation and coordination with Asia, the "Asia Broadband Program" is being promoted to enable all peoples in Asia to access broadband, with a goal to make Asia as a whole an information hub of the world.

Plans are additionally underway to build and strengthen cooperative relationships such as are essential in joint research and standardization handling for 3G and next-generation mobile communications among Japan, China, and Korea which account for approximately a quarter of the world's mobile telephone users. Regarding the progress expected for India in the future, a Japan-India Forum is being advanced to promote exchanges with the Indian

government and the information communications industry with the aim of supporting progress in the industry.

Approaches to economic problems taken

On the one hand, in terms of approaches to economic problems between Japan and the United States, and between Japan and Europe, the current situation has seen a past history of severe trade friction starting with that between Japan and the United States, and is now entering a period aimed at building much closer partnerships. In the future as well, Japan will strengthen and promote the establishment of economic partnerships and mutual understanding and coordination by maintaining effective communications and encouraging dialog on revising regulations as well as regular consultations and interaction on policies.

Coordination with international and regional organizations

In addition, with regard to coordination with international and regional organizations, while contributing to issues such as global standardization through coordination and discussions with international organizations such as the ITU (International Telecommunication Union) and APT (Asia-Pacific Telecommunity), Japan is actively participating in

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**International Policy Division,
International Affairs Department,
Telecommunications Bureau,
Ministry of Internal Affairs and
Communications (MIC)**
1-2, Kasumigaseki 2-chome, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8926, Japan
Fax: +81-3-5253-5924
Tel: +81-3-5253-5920

We welcome your comments via:
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the discussions on the liberalization of telecommunications services taking place at the WTO (World Trade Organization).

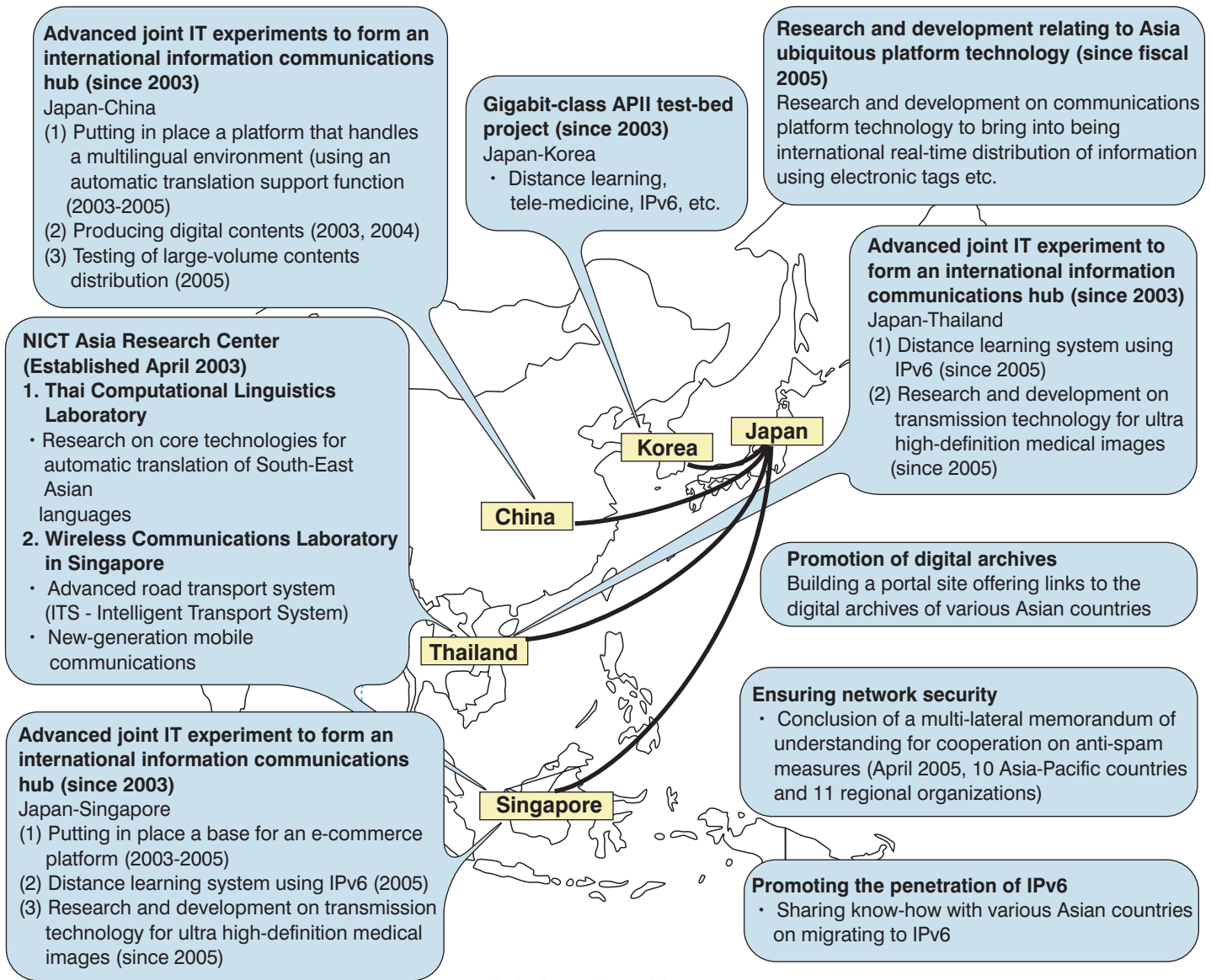
Taking into consideration these discussions with international and regional organizations, Japan

had been handling disputes between either two or multiple countries in a comprehensive manner. Further, taking into consideration that these interventions have been highly evaluated by the countries

involved, Japan is endeavoring to make even greater contributions in such ICT-related areas such as broadband, e-government, information security, and ubiquitous networks so as to continue to maximize policy results.

Status of Promotion of Principal Projects (Development of Applications, Contents and Core Technologies)

An international joint experiment has been in progress since fiscal 2003 through advanced joint IT experiments to form an international information communications hub



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International Standardization of Telecommunications Accessibility Guidelines

Introduction

With the development of an ICT centered society, equipment and services that are based on information communications technology have come to be used on a daily basis in every aspect of life and work. It is expected that even older persons and people with disabilities will reap numerous benefits as the use of ICT will enable them to obtain and transmit information without anyone's help. At the same time, however, in order for older persons and people with disabilities to reap the benefits of ICT, it is vitally important for manufacturers and operators to take their needs into consideration, that is to ensure accessibility so that they can use the equipment and services without impediments.

Approaches to improving telecommunications accessibility

MIC has been working in coordination with the Info-Communication Access Council which is made up of operators, manufacturers, organizations for older persons and people with disabilities, and academics, to improve accessibility in the field of telecommunications.

In concrete terms, taking into consideration the Principles of Accessibility of

Telecommunications Equipment for Persons with Disabilities that were formulated in 1998 by MPT, the Info-communication Access Council¹ formulated the Guidelines of Accessibility of Telecommunications Equipment for Persons with Disabilities (First Edition) in July 2000, and the Telecommunications Accessibility Guidelines for Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Second Edition) in May 2004, giving operators and manufacturers concrete examples of what needed to be considered in equipment and services. In addition, a JIS (Japan Industrial Standards) draft was prepared based on the portions relevant to equipment in the second edition of the guidelines, and in October 2005 was formulated in JIS X8341-4 "Part 4 Telecommunication Equipment" of "Guidelines for older persons and persons with disabilities - information and communications equipment, software and services."

International standardization of Telecommunications Accessibility Guidelines

Telecommunications equipment and services are not just domestically relevant but have a global connection, and for their accessibility to be ensured and

improved, it is vitally important to formulate standards that are internationally uniform. Japan has been engaged in the international standardization of guidelines against a background of promoting the formulation of domestic guidelines, and with the authorization of MIC's Information and Communications Council (Multimedia Committee) submitted a Japanese proposal for telecommunications accessibility guidelines to the ITU-T (International Telecommunication Union - Telecommunication Standardization Sector) in November 2004, obtaining the approval of member countries. Since then, concrete discussions of the contents have been carried out at the ITU-T Study Group 16², with Japan drafting and proposing the guidelines centering around the committee for deliberating telecommunications accessibility (Chaired by Professor MATSUMOTO Mitsuji, Graduate School of Waseda University) which was set up under the Info-Communication Access Council, and acting as leader for discussions within the SG-16. These actions bore fruit and approval as an ITU-T recommendation was granted on January 13, 2007.

(Reference) Domestic investigation system at MIC and Info-communication Access Council**Investigations and proposal preparation at Info-communication Access Council**

- o Guidelines of Accessibility of Telecommunications Equipment for Persons with Disabilities (First Edition) (July 2000)
- o Telecommunications Accessibility Guidelines for Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Second Edition) (May 2004)
- o Establishment of the committee for deliberating telecommunications accessibility (Chaired by Professor MATSUMOTO Mitsuji, Graduate School of Waseda University) (June 2005)

Active support by MIC

- o Announcement of Principles of Accessibility of Telecommunications Equipment for Persons with Disabilities (October 1998)
- o Participation in the committee shown on left
- o Approval of Japanese proposal at Multimedia Committee of Information and Communications Council

Figure: Outline of Telecommunications Accessibility Guidelines**Points for consideration****▶ Basic principle**

- In planning, developing and supplying telecommunications equipment, to make them usable by older persons and people with disabilities to the extent possible.

▶ Requirements concerning planning, development and design

- Within the development process for telecommunications equipment, to include older persons and people with disabilities among target users and keep in mind their conditions of use and their needs.

▶ Requirements for operation and use of telecommunications equipment and services

- To the extent possible, to make the basic functions easy to operate.
- To take care to avoid erroneous operation and, should this happen, to make it correctable.

▶ Particular requirements for telecommunications equipment

- To make sure that the layout, buttons, display, warning beeps and voice guidance are easy to understand and easy to operate.

▶ Particular requirements for telecommunications services

- To ensure real-time function and compatibility, and provide the mechanisms needed for media switching such as voice information to text information.

▶ Requirements related to user support

- To put in place several steps to deal with problems in manuals, support hotlines and the like.
- To implement the distribution of information concerning telecommunications accessibility for as many products as possible.

Outline of Telecommunications Accessibility Guidelines

These guidelines outline the points that those providing telecommunications equipment and services should keep in mind when planning, developing, designing and supplying, so that older persons and people with disabilities can, regardless of their disabilities or physical state, smoothly use telecommunications equipment and services such as fixed telephones, mobile telephones and faxes. (see figure)

For example, as an actual case of the points to keep in mind as shown in the "particular requirements for telecommunications equipment," raising the surface of the center of the button for the number 5 would make it easier for people with visual disabilities to figure out the positioning of all the other buttons by touch. In the "requirements related to user support," there

would be consideration for the hearing impaired who would find use of a telephone hotline difficult, by putting in place alternative services such as by fax or email.

Conclusion

As part of its efforts in information and dissemination activities domestically, MIC held a symposium³ in Tokyo in late March in coordination with the Info-Communications Access Council, and plans to continue to actively promote greater accessibility in telecommunications equipment and services. The international standardization of telecommunications accessibility guidelines is expected to provide the momentum to bring up domestic telecommunications equipment and services to the next level, so telecommunications equipment and services that can be used by anyone, including older persons and people with disabilities, will be widely available.

Note 1: Made up of telecommunications related organizations, organizations for people with disabilities and older persons and academics, and implementing activities aimed at maintaining and improving telecommunications accessibility. MIC participates as an observer.

Note 2: Study Group 16. In charge of standardization of accessibility terminals, systems and applications.

Note 3: Enquiries about the symposium should be made to the ICT Accessibility and Human Resources Development Division, Information and Communications Policy Bureau, MIC. Telephone: 03-5253-5743, Fax: 03-5253-5745