

Summary of Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the Study Group on Broadcasting for the Visually/Hearing Impaired in the Digital Broadcasting Era

1 Date and time:

December 11 (Mon), 2006, 13:00 to 15:00

2 Location:

Special Conference Room No.1, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

3 Attendees:

(1) Members (Honorifics omitted)

Shigeo Asahara, Kiyomi Arai, Yasushi Iwashita, Masahiko Ohto, Yoshihiro Oto, Noriko Kondo, Yoshihiko Sasagawa, Tadashi Sashikawa, Tadashi Takaoka, Hiroshi Takahashi, Satoru Tada, Yasuyoshi Tsutsumi, Tetsuo Tsurubuchi, Akira Terashima, Tsunehiko Hatakeyama, Kazufumi Fujiwara, Ryuko Furukawa, Ichiro Miyamoto

(2) Exponents

Takada (Director of the Organization of Broadcasting for People with Disability, a special NPO), Hayakawa (Study Group on the Closed-Captioned Broadcasting of the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan)

(3) Observer

Aoki (Special Officer for Information Assistance, Regional Living Support Office, Planning Department, Welfare Division for Persons with Disabilities, Department of Health and Welfare for Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare)

(4) MIC representatives

Terasaki (Director-General for Policy Planning), Katsuno (Deputy Director-General of Minister's Secretariat), Matsukawa (Director, Accessibility Division), Takada (Deputy Director, Accessibility Division)

4 Outline of proceedings:

(1) Opening

(2) Agenda

○ Requests from users

Member Kondo explained Document 3-1.

○ Initiatives of the Organization for People with Disabilities

Director Takada made a presentation on Document 3-2. Questions and answers followed.

[Questions and answers]

- There is a need for people who can explain and instruct elderly people and people with disabilities on how to use digital devices. We should be making the most of competent members of society.
- New devices must be designed based on the principle that they can be used by anyone.
- New digital television sets are equipped with multiple functions and we manufacturers are working to make them easier to use through voice navigation, a diverse range of products and easy-to-manipulate remote controllers. In terms of public relations, we are using relevant international exhibitions and other opportunities for promotional purposes.
- As for “barrier-free”, I cannot help feeling that we do not yet fully understand the variation in the range of users. If a more diverse range of users begin to use electronic devices, then we will have more accurate information to feed back to manufacturers.
- We want a universal remote controller not dedicated to a particular device.
- I think that the Organization of Broadcasting for People with Disability should be publicly funded.

○Comments from broadcasters

Member Hatakeyama explained Document 3-3 and Hayakawa, Chairman of the Study Group, explained Document 3-4. Questions and answers followed.

[Questions and answers]

- Open captions indicate just the main points, meaning people with hearing impairments cannot get enough information. Please be aware of the differences between closed and open captions.
- It was explained that narration is unnecessary for news since announcers are reading from text. However, I think it is necessary to give an outline of the contents. Please find a way to deal with comments spoken in foreign languages.
- It is not technically impossible to dub foreign language news into Japanese if the sub-voice is Japanese. However, this requires an announcer for the whole of the news broadcast, and thus we must determine how great the impact of this will be. We are studying how to produce closed captions using an automatic voice and a synthesized voice.
- It is true that it requires time in the case of dramas, since narration cannot be applied unless the program is completed one week before being aired. It seems not so much time is required for other programs.
- We will consider the expansion of narration broadcasting while studying how much need exists for it.

- It is necessary to make broadcasting for people with visual or hearing impairments mandatory by law and make the government allocate funding for it. I think it is accepted that the responsibility for providing this kind of broadcasting squarely lies with the government.
 - Some say that these people can listen to the radio, but news coverage is totally different on the radio and on television. I hope you will reconsider your position on this issue.
 - I actually wanted to emphasize the usefulness of the radio during disasters, as opposed to every day life. I remember when radio was the most important medium during disaster situations. I think we need to think about the use of a diverse range of media, including radio.
 - We need to think about accessibility from the standpoint of the rights of people with impairments. If it is construed as protecting the rights of people with impairments, the government's responsibilities will be clear. This may then give rise to the issue of the necessity of reaching social agreement on how private corporations and general viewers will share the burden. I would like the government to lead such discussions.
- Draft outline of the report
- The Secretariat explained Document 3-5. Questions and answers followed.

[Questions and answers]

- I would like to see emergency broadcasting added to the challenges for closed captions, narration and sign language broadcasting. Since emergency broadcasting is not only for people with visual or hearing impairments but also for the general public, I would like the phrase, "Emergency broadcasting will be improved as much as possible," to be included.
- Accessibility must be enhanced as soon as possible. As well as broadcasters, relevant people in each field must actively work on this issue. Furthermore, it is also necessary for general viewers to understand the issues. There must be a framework for cooperation by those concerned.
- I want broadcasters and the government to appoint a time and place to discuss specific issues with people with visual or hearing impairments.
- Current closed-captioned broadcasting has no scroll function and thus it is impossible to change the color or the position of closed captions. Since these functions are not standard but optional, I would like to see digital broadcasting standards that respond to the needs of people with impairments.
- It is getting tougher for broadcasters and our challenge is how to guarantee information provision in an era where various conditions will become stricter. We agree that you have understood the outline and will proceed with the work as required.

(3) Closing

End