

Summary of Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the Study Group on Broadcasting for the Visually/Hearing Impaired in the Digital Broadcasting Era

1 Date and time:

February 8 (Thurs), 2007, 16:30 to 18:30

2 Location:

Conference Room 1101, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

3 Attendees:

(1) Members (Honorifics omitted)

Shigeo Asahara, Kiyomi Arai, Masahiko Ohto, Yoshihiro Oto, Kimitsugu Kurano, 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, Mitsuji Hisamatsu (by proxy)

(2) 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)

(3) 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

- Draft report of the Study Group on Broadcasting for the Visually/Hearing Impaired in the Digital Broadcasting Era

The Secretariat explained Document 4-1. Questions and answers followed.

[Questions and answers]

- In order to understand the point of view of people with impairments, I would like the documents that have so far been presented in the Study Group to be attached to the report. I

would like people with impairments and broadcasters who read the report to come away from it with a full understanding of the process by which conclusions were reached.

- Please attach the minutes of the past meetings as either an exhibit or reference material.
- I do not understand why it is impossible to adopt the live closed-caption delay compensation system.
- The problems include the need to add to the broadcasting standards, to alter the live closed-caption input device and to add functions to television receivers.
- Programs produced by minor stations and aired throughout Japan are produced in Tokyo, where participants and studios are more readily available, and the finished programs are then physically sent to Osaka. On one occasion there was no time to apply closed captions in Osaka. It is the same in the case of narration broadcasting. In terms of time, it is difficult to send a completed program back to Tokyo for the text of the narration to be prepared and recorded before it goes back to Osaka.
- Remote controllers that are hard for people with visual impairments to manipulate are also difficult for elderly people. There is also the problem of older people not being able to follow closed captions because they scroll too fast. I would ask you to study not only the needs of people with hearing impairments but also those of elderly people.
- Remote controllers and their related manuals need to be appropriate for use by particular age groups. Specifically, we must develop simpler remote controllers for older people in addition to those used by the general population.
- The sequence of the report is as follows: the current status and institutional guarantees, new IT innovation strategy, initiatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, current status, examples abroad and challenges. I wonder if this sequence is the best one possible.
- I believe the report is well organized at the levels of the legal system, national policy and the initiatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.
- In the inquiry survey of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, it appears inadequate to ask those who need sign language, "Which should be applied, closed captions or sign language?" I think it would be better to analyze the outcome of the inquiry survey for respective groups, since the inquiry for people with hearing impairments was conducted for the Japanese Federation for the Deaf and all persons with impaired hearing.
- It seems that in order for the proposals in the report to become concrete, they should be reorganized.
- A significant number of the elderly people who are the target of the survey can use a personal computer and own a digital television set. I would like this fact to be mentioned in the report.
- NHK has been dispatching staff to give digital broadcasting seminars, if desired. How about mentioning this in the report?

- The Information Communication Access Council was introduced in the “Study on the opportunities for exchanging opinions.” I would like it to read, “An organization, such as the Broadcasting Access Council, must be formed if possible.”
- Closed captioning was developed because there was a set goal. Similarly, neither the broadcasting of narration or sign language will develop without set goals, as they are difficult tasks.
- With regard to narration, it seems that goals other than those set in terms of numeric values may be set in the current circumstances.
- I believe numeric targets are essential to encourage the technological development by Japanese corporations.
- I think an overseeing institution is required. An overseeing institution and research institution are different. I would like you to consider separating them even if that means their respective staff members will be fewer in number.
- Details of the progress of closed-captioned broadcasting have been compiled and published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Agreement from all parties is required and it seems that there may be various options.
- I would like the record to reflect the discussion about numeric targets. I expect the report to include the fact that we discussed how we should set goals, not just that we should have them.
- While the title of the report includes the phrase “in the Digital Broadcasting Era,” it does not explain to the reader why we should switch to digital broadcasting. More explanation may be needed. It should be our policy that digital broadcasting is necessary, has social advantages and that the development of barrier-free broadcasting will benefit all people in this aging society.
- (With regard to the statement regarding the necessity of digital broadcasting) I think it is a call of encouragement to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.
- We expect new proposals which are more focused on quality than on quantity. Proposals should include real goals, rather than just figures, to indicate the actual performance of the expansion plan. People should be informed about how much the technology of NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) has developed. I believe that quality rather than quantity is also the rule in terms of opportunities for exchanging views among groups.
- I would like the description to include a review of the Broadcasting Law, since the provisions of this law do not include broadcasting sign language.

End