

Draft Summary of Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the Study Group on Broadcasting for the Visually/Hearing Impaired in the Digital Broadcasting Era

1 Date and time:

March 5 (Mon), 2007, 14:00 to 15:20

2 Location:

Shared Conference Room 3, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

3 Attendees:

(1) Members (Honorifics omitted)

Shigeo Asahara, Kiyomi Arai, Yasushi Iwashita, Masahiko Ohto, 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

(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), 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 5-1. Questions and answers followed.

[Questions and answers]-

- I would ask you to add to “1.3 Institutional guarantee” a “Law for the promotion of the project to improve communication and broadcasting services for people with physical disabilities” which was enacted in 1993.
- Also in terms of the Broadcast Law, it is a significant problem that broadcasting does not serve

people with visual and hearing impairments. It appears to be a very good thing that the conclusion was added to the institutional guarantee, but the final part shall be expressed as, “The institutional guarantee, including amendments to laws, must be studied in order to promote the support of people with impairments through cooperation between the public and private sectors.”

- The term “closed caption” written in Japanese katakana is long and difficult to understand. Maybe it could be replaced by such a term as button caption.
- The plans for the provision of narration services should be put in stronger terms. The expression, “It may be possible to develop guidelines,” should be replaced with, “Guidelines must be developed.” The fact that no numeric targets are set for narration services is a problem.
- I understand that numeric targets must not be presented at the time the report was published, but I think an addition along the lines of, “It will be discussed during the exchange of comments” would be appropriate. Also, regarding sign language broadcasting, I would ask you to change it to read, “There was a comment that, ‘Sign language broadcasting must be added to the mandatory provisions of the Broadcast Law and guidelines should be developed for it, just as for closed-caption broadcasting.’”
- The purpose of this Study Group is to discuss the direction of broadcasting services for people with visual and hearing impairments in the future. I believe that discussions on law-related matters should be based on an understanding of the current status and technical issues.
- Even if no numeric targets are set out by the Study Group, it should be clearly communicated that such problems exist by indicating that the necessity for this was pointed out in the Study Group.
- I think it is appropriate that a variety of opinions are recorded so as to correctly convey the discussions held by the Study Group.
- Does the phrase, “The period of the guidelines is set for 10 years ...,” means that a guideline will be created in 2010, not only for closed-caption broadcasting, but also for narration broadcasting and sign language broadcasting? Is that right? In that case we will be able to have meetings and discussions for three years.
- No, it means that the guidelines will apply for 10 years. They must be reviewed from time to time after being set out, taking into consideration technological developments and other circumstances. With regard to narration broadcasting, we are considering developing administrative guidelines based on this report and we will thus word it appropriately. We must discuss sign language broadcasting by taking into consideration technical issues and research and development possibilities. So guidelines are not limited only to closed-captioned broadcasting. We will discuss where to place the statement.
- The issue of taking quantity but also quality into account in terms of the numeric targets which

are to be set out in the guidelines was discussed. I would ask you to develop guidelines which include not only numeric values, but also issues of quality and application to actual programs.

- As for narration broadcasting, studies need to be made regarding what type of narration broadcasting is desired in programs incorporating sound and how it should be produced. We will be able to have more meaningful discussions if you tell us how much it is used by people with disabilities.
- Live broadcasting programs may be created to solve the problem, eliminating the need for attaching narration broadcasting. All you do is avoid the use of demonstrative pronouns. I hope you will take such considerations into account in your study of narration broadcasting.
- From now on, I would like to see meaningful discussions which include how we should use limited resources.
- We are studying the technical aspect of narration broadcasting and have found individuals have different requirements. Some want detailed interpretation while others want at least an outline. We must get this straight. We will work with broadcasters to provide effective narration broadcasting.
- Closed-captioned broadcasting programs are increasingly becoming essential for most people with hearing impairments. Thanks to closed captions, they can get the same information as people without hearing impairments, which they appreciate.
- The term “the congenital deaf” is used in the description of the current status of sign language broadcasting, but please add that sign language is used not only by those who are deaf from birth, but also by “those who became deaf at a young age.”
- The phrase, “such as live discussion programs and talk show programs” is included in the section relating to the “expansion of broadcasting programs to which closed captions can be attached,” but it seems unnecessary to include this. If it is specifically included, it appears as though closed captions are not already attached to such programs.
- It would be better to accurately list items without any ambiguity, as long as they are listed in relation to the administrative guidelines. I believe that it will be most unambiguous to leave the task to the administrative guidelines if you don’t give any examples. Please understand that there are many issues involved in the process of adding closed captions to live broadcasting that make it undesirable to reach premature conclusions.
- Regarding the institutional guarantee, broadcasters work on the market principle, but as basic premise I would like the government to support us as members of society. Please think about the long-term potential benefits to society, rather than just the short term.
- Perhaps it would be better to call it, for example, a “universal design service,” to emphasize that the service is enjoyed by the general public, instead of describing it as “for people with visual or hearing impairments.”

- With regard to universal design, I am glad that one segment of broadcasting has been commercialized. However, when closed captions are commercialized it will be a case of majority rules and the opinions of the minority will be ignored. I think some guidelines are required to set the basic premises before commercialization occurs.
- I was disappointed to find no sufficient statement about sign language broadcasting. In addition, broadcasters, rather than the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, should consider issues surrounding monitoring separately to these discussions.
- As the Organization of Broadcasting for People with Disability has accumulated technologies, please examine the possibility of sharing these technologies with NHK (Japanese Broadcasting Corporation) and other private broadcasters.
- We have heard a wide range of opinions from various standpoints. I would like to see broadcasters also thinking in detail about how to respond to the requests from viewers.

(3) Future schedule

Responsibility for the compilation of the report based on today's discussion was given exclusively to the Chairman. The report is expected to be published sometime in March.

(4) Closing

End