

Panel on ICT Growth—5th Meeting

Summary of Minutes

1. Date and Time

Thursday, April 3, 2008; 17:00–18:25

2. Location

Special Conference Room 1, 8th floor, MIC

3. Attendees (honorifics omitted)

Panel Members: Itami (Vice Chair), Okamura, Katsuma, Shinozaki, Tokuda, Nohara, Furukawa, Morikawa

Suzuki (Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination), Ogasawara (Director-General, Information and Communications Policy Bureau), Terasaki (Director-General, Telecommunications Bureau), Nakata (Director-General for Policy Planning), Matsumoto (Director-General for Technology Policy Coordination), Matsui (Deputy Director-General of Minister's Secretariat), Suzuki (Director, General Policy Division), Imagawa (Examiner, General Policy Division), Nagaya (Director, Government Information Systems Planning Division, Administrative Management Bureau), Ichihashi (Director, Policy Planning Division, Local Administration Bureau)

4. Proceedings

(1) Following a speech by Vice Chair Itami, the secretariat explained the reference documents, and the panel then engaged in a general discussion based on these documents as outlined below.

Okamura:

- The media still has a variety of potential. I do not think that we have been able to make full use of the Internet. Increased use of electronic textbooks and electronic money is important.
- There should be more use of archives. For example, archives can be used to enable people to attend the Open University of Japan on demand for life-long learning, or to enable local governments to make it easier for their residents to obtain resident cards online.
- The government has not provided some services that can be provided if a videophone system is used. What is technologically possible is not being implemented.

- I think the idea of an expanded special district for ubiquitous technology is wonderful. I hope we continue to see a variety of specific ideas and can test various systems in real-world environments. Good ideas should be actively recognized by such as certifying them as leading-edge ICT services.

Nohara:

- Since this is the interim Panel on ICT Growth report, it should mention visions and policies that lead to industry growth. Using ICT does not immediately equate to growth (for example, workforce reduction). The use of ICT leads to growth when current industries use ICT to create a new business sector or to increase their competitive strength to expand their operations in the global market. We should emphasize this point.
- On the other hand, even if it does not lead to growth, increasing the use of ICT itself is important, because it will help to enrich people's lives, leading to a positive future vision of society.
- It is therefore important that we include specific policy measures that promote ICT use. The ICT use in this report should not be something like a "U-Japan Strategy II." It should not be an extension of the present direction or goals, such as increasing the penetration rate of fiber optic lines or some other services. For example, in the current E-tax scheme, the data digitized on the employer's side is printed on the income and withholding tax certificate that is given to the employee, who will again digitize this data by entering it through the computer at the time of income tax return filing. There should be shared databases and common formats so that the employer-digitized data can be shared at the time of income tax return filing. The important point is to work toward this kind of quantitative change in ICT use and to promote the next-generation use of ICT.
- It may be easier to understand if a new business sector can be suggested as part of the future vision of society.

Furukawa:

- I think the direction this report is taking is good, but the final report would require more specific details. It would require goals such as increasing the discount for E-tax, or establishing LANs in all schools. It is important to establish ICT as something quite commonplace in society.
- Saga prefecture is the only prefecture in Japan that gives a maximum 50 percent discount for online filings. Even for answering queries, they try to provide a one-stop service where people can go to the reception desk and ask for the person in charge. This way, people

asking for service will not have to go from one section to another looking for the appropriate person in charge.

- How can we get the elderly interested in ICT? Rather than thinking of ways to improve ICT literacy among the elderly, it is more important to develop systems that are easy for the elderly who are not technology savvy to use, such as a system with speech recognition instead of requiring input through a keyboard. If such systems could be connected with home appliances, the elderly will also be able to use ICT in their daily lives. We need to make the computers invisible.
- Saga prefecture is trying to reduce the burden of each municipality by integrating the systems. The same should happen across Japan.
- It would be desirable to have various suggestions come from private businesses regarding the use of ICT.

Minister Masuda:

- We had private sector members at the council meeting point out that the policies do not have a sense of speed. It is important that we root out inefficiency, such as requiring filing to be accomplished both online and through paperwork, and improve our business processes. The key is often a matter of making a decision, so we will increase our speed in promoting e-government by prompt execution.
- The local governments often have disparate systems, and I would also like to tackle this problem.
- I would like this panel to discuss the usability of ICT and set a course for actions. I believe some important steps in this would be the discussion on how ICT use and technology are beneficial in striking a balance between growth and environment, as well as discussions with an eye on the next generation, after 2010, that will follow NGN.

Shinozaki:

- It is important to focus on growth. Often, the small schemes created by man are acting as bottlenecks in realizing the potential that technology can unlock. If we identify these bottlenecks, we would see that they are an accumulation of small matters, but it would be important to have a large-scale project that can identify these bottlenecks so that we can tackle these issues in a comprehensive manner. Otherwise, we may end up scattering our attention on minutia, which might solve the individual problems but not contribute to the overall growth.
- We need to have an action plan detailed sufficiently for actual action in reconsidering the

schemes.

- The current interim report is satisfactory, but we need to dig deeper in the final report regarding the large-scale project to create specific action plans.
- We may be able to promote ICT utilization by summing up what we have gained in the special district, and rolling out to the public what the advanced companies have achieved.

Tokuda:

- The special district for ubiquitous technology should not be established separately. We need to think of a 'super' special district that connects the activities of special district A and special district B. In considering this matter, we can define ICT layers such as layer 1 for infrastructure, layer 2 for service, layer 3 for content, and layer 4 for collaboration. We should have active efforts to remove the boundaries to extend the activities over the next higher layer.

Vice Chair Itami:

- A special district is set up for deregulation, rather than a place where policies are implemented selectively, so we should consider it more as a showcase.

Furukawa:

- The name "Ubiquitous Tokku" (special district for ubiquitous technology) has a strong connotation of being related to frequencies. We should have a name that indicates a wider concept.

Morikawa:

- With regard to the future vision on page 8, we should identify eye-catching uses that can show what advances in the uses of ICT can realize. We should point out things that are not possible now, but that can become possible in the future.
- We may also want to include the idea of an entire factory being ubiquitous in our priority areas.

Vice Chair Itami:

- The "pillar of growth" expression should be changed to "creating new business areas."

Katsuma:

- The way this report is put together makes it difficult for it to make the media headlines. We need easy-to-understand tag lines, for example, "from the world's no.1 infrastructure to the world's no.1 xx."
- We need to focus a bit more on the growth/enhancement regarding people.
- We may want to have a subtitle.

Vice Chair Itami:

- ...such as “ICT has not started yet”?

Nohara:

- “ICT has not started yet” is good. We should have a keyword included.

Shinozaki:

- It is necessary to have an idea that can bring together Japan’s bonding strength—for example, “For the recovery of our competitive strength by leveraging the world’s no.1 infrastructure.”

Morikawa:

- The concept of “bonding” is important. Today we are quite divided in many ways.

Okamura:

- “ICT has not spoken yet,” “ICT has not started yet.” The message should be why we are not using the technology more when there is so much we can do.

Furukawa:

- Having the final report only contain what we can do now will not send out a positive message. We can include the notion of committing ourselves even if it is something that cannot be realized easily.
- For example, in considering electronic money, it might be interesting to take an approach of starting the discussion from whether we truly need coins or should discontinue them.

Vice Chair Itami:

- “Reducing the burden on the environment” on page 12 does not come forward with a strong message. We should change the text to make it convey our intention to have certain industries and projects as the major pillars of growth.

Morikawa:

- “Move, ICT” may be good.

Vice Chair Itami:

- The two points that were identified (“pillars of growth” and “reducing the burden on the environment) will be revised.
- As for the tag line, please let the secretariat know if you have any good ideas.
- May we entrust the final updates and release of the interim report to the Chair and Vice Chair?

All members:

- Agreed.

Examiner Imagawa:

- The interim report is scheduled to be released in the week of April 7.
- The user survey for evaluation and future vision is now completed. We will be moving on to survey with the experts, so I would like to ask for the cooperation of our panel members. I would also like to plan a column series by the panel members (“Growth Panel Eleven”).

(2) The meeting was closed after the Vice Chair explained that the date of the next meeting would be announced later.