Study Group on Intelligent Home Appliance Networking
Summary of Fourth Meeting Proceedings

1. Date and Time: July 15, 2005 (Fri) 9:30-10:30

2. Location: Péche Room, Toranomon Pastoral Hotel

3. Attendees (Honorifics omitted): Chairman Ishii, Vice-chairman Murakami, Okinaka, Koriyama, Seki, Takebayashi, Chiba (proxy for Ueda), Tsuga, Tokuda, Tokoro, Nohara, Hashimoto, Fujimoto, Furukawa, Fuwa, Muraki (proxy for Shigematsu)

4. Agenda: Interim Report by the Study Group on Intelligent Home Appliance Networking

5. Proceedings:
(1) Chairman Ishii made opening remarks.
(2) The Secretariat described the above agenda based on the references:
    ① Proposed interim report by the "Study Group on Intelligent Home Appliance Networking"
    ② Digital technology roadmap
    ③ Realizing the plan for intelligent home appliance networking

(3) The members voiced the following opinions:
   ◯ Demonstration experiments should verify the two points, technology and service content, and should be participated in by end users who are highly aware of these issues. If we provide end users with opportunities to select service content and have discourse with business operators, rather than allowing business operators to push services unilaterally, future launches of services would be facilitated. It is desirable for end users and business operators to work on development together.
   ◯ The connection between the indoor and the outdoor in reference 4 is effective. The outdoor part can be more elaborate. It should also refer to how easy the user interface is to use. Things should have a broader appeal for general users.
   As home gateways cannot be compatible with all specifications on the networks, we should provide flexibility by assuming three levels and limiting the target for the entry level to white goods and some audio-visual devices.
   ◯ The diagram that encompasses the indoor and the outdoor finally allows us to grasp the big picture.
   Demonstration experiments should focus on projects that can be done only when MIC and METI collaborate. The participation of consumers in the demonstration experiments is crucial.
   ◯ References 3 and 4 should be included in the report (interim report).
   What matters is that the market will start as a result of the demonstration experiments. Page 17 of the interim report should conclude by specifying that starting the market is the goal. It should be clearly indicated that the initiative is lead by the private sector,

although the government provides support.

○ The reason demonstration experiments should be conducted is to show how networked intelligent home appliances actually work. For example, if people see new technologies at an exposition, they can picture specific images, which could result in the creation of needs.

○ Although "home gateways" have long existed, they have not diffused due to the connectivity issue. It is a problem if nothing can be started without a gateway.

It is better to organize things from a step-by-step approach. The first phase may focus on identifying what could replace home gateways, how the functions could evolve, whether these could be targets for research and development, and whether initiatives could be advanced in parallel with prototype development.

○ We should see to it that things that have never been done before will be achieved through the cooperation of MIC and METI, rather than simply appreciating the collaboration.

Does the first diagram in reference 4 mean that a home gateway should be set up besides a TV set? It is better just to imply that a gateway candidate has not been decided by using such expression as "For instance, a gateway could be created."

How will this initiative be launched globally? We cannot recoup our investment if it is limited to within Japan. Korean or Chinese companies will soon catch up with us in the field of home networks. How can we gain international competitiveness?

○ Broadband seems to be the assumption of these demonstration experiments, but we may pursue narrowband content as well. In fact, there are many things that can be sufficiently achieved with narrowband, such as control of home appliances. In that case, a home gateway can be positioned as a home router or a home switch.

○ We think the very concept of home appliances will change. It can be said, "more people can access content services and essential information for living."

For example, it may be possible to provide disaster prevention information via home appliances.

○ Providing disaster information is definitely a mission of the government.

It is crucial that the home appliances that we use daily are usable in extraordinary circumstances (in the case of disaster/emergency). It is difficult to take out special appliances for emergency when disaster occurs.

○ Security is very important. As a personal authentication server is indicated in the diagram in reference 4, development of the infrastructure for personal authentication will be an especially important issue.

(4) Future direction

Chairman Ishii consulted with the study group on leaving the task of putting together the "interim report" to the chair. The members approved doing so.

The Secretariat explained the planned announcement of the interim report on July 20.