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NICT NEWS

National Institute of Information and Communications Technology



2004

APR.

《No.337》

Memorial Issue Celebrating Launch of the NICT

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■ On the Occasion of the Launch of the NICT



Makoto Nagao, President

I would like to extend my greetings to you on the occasion of the launch of the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT).

We have now made a fresh start as a new independent administrative institution, the NICT, following a merger of the Communications Research Laboratory (CRL) and the Telecommunications Advancement Organization of Japan (TAO). As part of overall administrative reforms, the Japanese government has been reorganizing and consolidating national research institutions and special public corporations into independent administrative institutions. Accordingly, along with our efforts to streamline the organization, we are now expected to achieve better results.

The NICT was established to conduct comprehensive R&D—from basic to applied levels—in information communication technology (ICT), to prepare for and provide business support in the current and future advanced information communication society. Further to the consolidation of the CRL (which as an organization had mainly focused on basic research in information communication) and TAO (which had been carrying out R&D on the practical application of ICT in collaboration with industry and academia, and providing support for telecom and broadcasting businesses and for R&D at universities and private companies), the NICT now manages a range of functions based on a comprehensive policy to promote progress within the field. Against this backdrop our overall goal is to develop into an “Engine for Future Growth through ICT.”

On the occasion of the launch of the NICT, I would like to propose the following five objectives as a foundation for the basic policies that will drive our activities:

The first objective is to reinforce cooperation among industry, academia, and the government in R&D in ICT, so that we may establish a foundation for a future advanced information communication society, in addition to providing active support for R&D at universities and private companies. By accurately assessing the relevant societal problems and needs, we will select issues to be addressed and then conduct R&D and provide overall support relating to these issues.

The second objective is to enhance public awareness of the NICT. We must work to enhance public knowledge—both domestically and internationally—of the excellent research ac-

tivities taking place at the NICT in the information communication field, so that more people may understand our aims and achievements. To achieve this, NICT researchers need to have professional confidence, pride, and vision, as they work to produce outstanding results in domestic and international academic circles. As a result, frequent personnel activities will be used to supply human resources for research in this field. Fortunately, many young and talented people will likely be interested in working within the NICT, and those with established reputations in academia will also be invited to participate in university research.

The third objective is to identify societal needs, constantly revising medium- and long-term strategies in a flexible manner, with active reorganization of research groups based on these strategies, all in order to extend the benefits of R&D to society in a timely manner. This is necessary because the information communication society is evolving and changing at an accelerating pace. When devising these strategies and visions, we will seek the opinions of academic experts and take into account the government's information communication policies; I hope that these strategies in turn will contribute to the formulation of governmental policy. This objective thus requires that we work to ensure sufficient tangible results from our R&D activities.

The fourth objective is to assess NICT's precise position within ICT R&D. Universities and industry conduct basic research and research on practical application of technologies, respectively. While reinforcing our collaboration with these sectors, we will also identify the specific research activities that NICT should focus on, aggressively pursuing these activities alongside the R&D activities and services required by the government.

Finally, one of the most important characteristics of an independent administrative institution is its ability to operate on its own. In addition to providing support for the technological foundation of the government's information communication policies, we will carry out certain activities based on our own assessment of industry and societal needs.

Today we are witnessing a significant transformation toward a knowledge-based society. Being well aware of this trend, Japan should make its global contribution through the creation and use of knowledge through greater international

competitiveness and sustainable growth, in the awareness of the nation's limited store of natural resources. The NICT will establish the following four strategic R&D programs as it plays its role in governmental R&D projects such as the "Basic Program for Science and Technology" and the "e-Japan Strategy." We will selectively allocate resources to urgent issues, such as those related to the environment, safety, and public concerns, as well as to technical issues that could spur new trends within the industry. Through these efforts, we will work to create information communication technologies in Japan that are conducive to the creation and use of knowledge.

(1) R&D activities to create key technologies in communication, use of content, and ubiquitous computing, serving as the basis for the dissemination of new ICT technologies from Japan to the rest of the world

(2) R&D activities in information security, electromagnetic compatibility, global environmental measurement and more, for a safer society

(3) R&D activities to create a new paradigm for the development of innovative communication methods (e.g., biocommunication and photonic/quantum communications) to form a societal infrastructure designed for the world 10 to 20 years from now

(4) Efforts to create key initiatives—for example, the establishment of an R&D network and the promotion of private-sector research in fundamental technologies—to maximize the benefits of technology development nationwide

We would like to venture into the fields of language, human perception, and similar areas to help apply the enormous potential of perception to the heart of ICT development in Japan.

The 21st century may be called the century of information. In order to gain the maximum benefits of information, it must not simply be created and accumulated—it must be used, and used to the fullest. New information communication technologies developed in the coming years are likely to enable humans to create, accumulate, and use information in unprecedented ways. I believe that the role of the NICT is to clarify the potential of each and every such innovation for the people of this country.