

Foreword

Last October, four Japanese researchers were awarded the Nobel Prize, setting an epochal milestone along Japan's path of scientific advancement. I myself attended the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony in Sweden. While extending my hearty congratulations to the four new Nobel Laureates, I was reminded anew of the latent power and potential of Japan's basic research and motivated to strengthen it even further. Toward that end, our Ministry has designated this year as the "Year of Enhancing Basic Science Capability," while working energetically to devise concrete policies and measures for strengthening that capability.

Amidst the intensifying economic crisis embroiling the world, each country is implementing policies designed to generate employment through investment in environment- and energy-related fields of science and technology. Concomitantly, Japan finds itself facing a period of global transition accelerated by socioeconomic changes spawn by such S&T expansion policies. Passing safely through this transitional period will require Japan to generate innovation by adeptly applying a powerful S&T capacity. As we set about devising Japan's next Fourth Science and Technology Basic Plan, this is a critical juncture, one in which we must consider how best to advance Japan's S&T policy from a medium to long-term perspective.

This White Paper on Science and Technology, entitled *Towards Japan's Own Innovative Science and Technology across the Threshold of Global Transition*, addresses how, amidst this period of global transition, Japan should go about seeking solutions to global environmental problems while maintaining sustainable socioeconomic development within the world community and, within this context, what Japan can do to strengthen the international competitiveness of its own Monozukuri (manufacturing) and service industries. Beyond an S&T framework for advancing these objectives, the White Paper also introduces a new R&D system for bolstering the capability of Japan's basic science, which is the headspring of innovation, and for creating a globally open, highly attractive research environment within Japan.

It is my hope that this White Paper will give the Japanese public a closer sense of affinity for science and technology and a deeper understanding of Japan's S&T policies.

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Ryu Shionoya

Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology