

Foreword

Science and technology brings new “knowledge” to mankind, and greatly contributes to improving our lives and developing the society and economy. Today, the environment surrounding Japan is becoming severer with the advancement of the declining birthrate and aging of the population as well as a decrease in the total population. In order for Japan, which is poor in natural resources, to achieve a safe and secure society while continuing to maintain its international competitiveness, science and technology will be expected to play an increasingly important role in the future.

This year marks the tenth year from the promulgation and entry into force of the Science and Technology Basic Law, which indicates the basic framework of Japan’s science and technology policies. At the same time, it is the final fiscal year for the Second Science and Technology Basic Plan—key principles based on the Basic Law—and the year for preparing for formulation of the Basic Plan for the next period. Thus, it is an important year, which will be a turning point for science and technology administration.

Since the enactment of the Science and Technology Basic Law the government has engaged in various measures including an increase and prioritization of science and technology budget and reform of the science and technology system. These efforts are steadily producing results and spillover effects. On the other hand, because science and technology has become ever more sophisticated and complicated and has deeply penetrated people’s lives, people have become less aware of science and technology. This is possibly one of the causes for people’s declining interest in science and technology.

As a country is supported by its “people,” development of talented human resources is essential for promotion of science and technology, and moreover, as the basis for nation-building. Therefore, in order to raise people’s interest in science and technology as part of such effort, the White Paper on Science and Technology FY 2005, entitled “Japan Ten Years after the Enactment of the Science and Technology Basic Law and Its Future,” comprehensively analyzes and evaluates the recent achievements, challenges, and international level of Japan’s science and technology, by referring to familiar case examples, people, and facilities as much as possible to make it easy to understand.

The Japanese government intends to exert further efforts toward becoming an advanced science- and technology- oriented nation by positioning science and technology as an important policy issue. It is hoped that this white paper will help people understand the trend of science and technology in Japan and overseas, and the Japanese government’s efforts for promoting science and technology.

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