Statement by Yasuchika Hasegawa, Chairman of Keizai Doyukai
Development of "The Common Government Platform"
Under Government Information System Reforms

Government's "Declaration to be the World's Most Advanced IT Nation" (approved by the Cabinet on June 14, 2013) shows the objectives of the government information system reforms to be "extensive use of cloud computing will lead to higher efficiencies on larger scales, seamless collaboration that eliminates vertical organizational divisions, improved ability to respond rapidly and flexibly to change, and substantial cost reductions through more efficient administrative operations." "The roadmap for government information system reforms" was established in January 2014 and a full-fledged development of the common government platform (introduction of cloud computing to information systems of each ministry and agency, system integration and consolidation) will be launched going forward.

The government plans to announce "the second phase growth strategy" in June. In the first phase growth strategy, i.e. "Japan Revitalization Strategy" (approved by the Cabinet on June 14, 2013), the development of e-government services targeting Japanese nationals and users was presented. We hope that measures to further accelerate government information system reforms will be included in the second phase growth strategy.

From this perspective and in order to achieve such aggressive objectives, the government CIO must sufficiently play a pivotal role in controlling government's overall IT policy in consideration of previous cases where government's IT procurement did not end successfully. To clarify our thoughts, we present three points below which we believe need attention.

As we have repeatedly advocated our comments in terms of the importance of government information system reforms[1], we will keep our eyes on the progress of the reforms.

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[1] Keizai Doyukai's previous statements include:
- "Public comment to 'Declaration to be the World's Most Advanced IT Nation (Draft)'" June 5, 2013
- "Passage of the bills related to My Number (national identification number" May 24, 2013
- "Realization of a numbering system we can be proud of for the next generation: national interest > national's interest > interests of politicians, ministries, and corporations" March 21, 2012
- "Review on Japan's e-government promotion policy and challenges going forward" April 21, 2011
- "Five proposals for the next growth by utilization of ICT: Economic and social system reconstruction by establishing a horizontal functionality" March 3, 2010

1. Full Adoption of Open Standard IT Requirements

The open standard IT requirements should be fully adopted for the purpose of enjoying the maximum benefits in the cost reduction and the IT advancement, so that the common government platform will be developed and used at significantly reduced costs and will be utilized as the world's most advanced information system both in name and reality.

In this regard, the final paper provided by "The Research Committee on the Government Information System Development" of Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (announced on April 16, 2010) states as follows:
"In case the platform's specification depends upon a certain product and IT, the total system structure toward which the integration and the consolidation should occur will depend upon such product and its specification while at the same time the flexibility in improving and maintaining the platform itself will be reduced."
The paper finally proposes the adoption of "a standard specification available for the multi-vendor use."

Thus, whether various requirements for the platform system development, as well as the methods to develop and procure devices and software, fully reflect such perspectives as above is essential and needs a thorough review together with an assessment on publication of technological information and the decision process. Accountability to public will be fulfilled through such actions.

2. Transparent Information Disclosure for Cost and Procurement through "IT Dashboard"

Japan Revitalization Strategy states that the government will establish PDCA cycle of IT investment management through utilizing the Japanese version of the "IT dashboard" (the system where people can access lists of the government's IT investment situations via the Internet).

The IT dashboard is now being developed for the operation to start in July 2014. In order to ensure the reviewing process mentioned in the #1 point above, the IT dashboard must truly contribute to "the establishment of PDCA cycle" where public administrators have not shown their capability until today.

This means that the data available from IT dashboard should present information such as budget-related items, status-quo of the government information systems, procurement-related items, dependency on a certain product and technology, and

benchmark comparison with IT-advanced nations in a clear and transparent way. Board of Audit should also completely uncover the waste in the IT investment budget through its comprehensive inspections on expenses and benefits.

3. Robust Development of the Common Government Platform

Today, government's IT utilization such as introduction of My Number (national identification number) system is expected to be more efficient. Under such conditions, the development of the common government platform is a very important initiative. We hope that the common government platform will be able to provide not only server integration via virtualization but also a holistic cloud infrastructure such as ministry-and-agency wide API[2] and services that will promote the efficiency further.

On the other hand, a proper staffing at the government is vital for the common government platform to be robustly developed. Exchange of expert knowledge through personnel exchange between public and private sector is important. Thus, public sectors should receive secondees from private sectors and vice versa.

Finally, it is worth stating that the common government platform is one of the measures to reduce the administrative costs by introduction of cloud computing, integration, and consolidation for information systems, but the common government platform alone cannot realize the real Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) as a matter of course.

We hope that each ministry, agency, and municipality will realize administrative structure with high efficiency and reliability by reviewing the allocation of authoritative powers as well as administrative flows while reviewing the information system at the same time.

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[2]API (application programming interfaces): A set of public functions and processes with which software such as operations system allows other programs to utilize a part of its own functionalities. Operations system generally defines API for input/output processes, file management, memory management, and windows management. Developers of application software can make their development phases efficient by using API and easily cooperate with other software running on the same operations system. (Source: Nikkei PC Digital IT Glossary)