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Developing Medical and Welfare Business with Respect for Human Dignity (Summary)

- Changing National Values to Build a Sustainable Society -

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- Japan's population has been aging faster than that of any other country in the world, and its population of the elderly will remain large in the future. But this could also be turned into a source of competitive strength by constructing a model of social and industrial infrastructure that accommodates a long-lived society. With Japan leading the way in Asia in terms of population aging, we aim to acquire international standards for medical equipment and medical care services, thereby stimulating the economy and creating employment.
- The aim of this proposal is to develop the medical and welfare business in order to (1) increase the options available to the public, and (2) create a sustainable society in spite of the continuing aging and shrinking of the population.
- Surveys indicate that people want the freedom to choose what services are best for them, including whether they need medical and welfare services. Taking into account financial constraints and global trends in reforming Japan's social security system, we should aim to:
 - (1) build a new social security system that balances self-help, mutual assistance and public assistance and reduces the generational disparities in burden and benefits.→ To achieve this, the industry and government need to improve transparency and intelligibility in providing information to the public, while the public need to understand and support a system of mutual assistance and government assistance. Businesses will take initiatives such as

incorporating social security related content into their employee training programs.

(2) provide diverse and high-quality services designed from the viewpoint of users.

→ To achieve this, it is vital that a range of businesses enter the medical and welfare service field to create robust competition. Making investment and employment in those sectors more attractive requires greater freedom of investment in medical institutions and of distribution of dividends and other surplus funds by institutions themselves. It also requires equal competition conditions such as public subsidies and tax breaks for all nursing and childcare facilities.

- The other points of reform for the industries are as follows.

Medicine:

(1) Improve and streamline the evaluation system for the approval of drugs and medical equipment, and review the responsibilities of government in this field. This will encourage the supply and creation within Japan of leading-edge drugs and medical equipment.

(2) Create a large-scale clinical database and review the Medical Practitioners Law to legalize home care practices utilizing the telemedicine technology. This will effectively link advances in the development of ICT to the improvement of people's lives and to industry development in the area of medicine.

Nursing and childcare:

Review facility installation regulations and standards to encourage the conversion of existing facilities built for purposes other than nursing and childcare, such as elementary schools, into nursing or childcare facilities. This will quickly shorten admission waiting lists while diversifying services.

- The success of these reforms will require (1) the people, government, public administration, and industry to share the same recognition of Japan's social security system and of the global competitiveness of Japan's pharmaceutical and medical equipment industries, (2) a mid- to long-term perspective, and (3) close communication between the people, government and industry. It is also essential to consider "human dignity." "Human dignity," which equals to the respect for personal choice, requires the public to fully understand their responsibilities that come with such freedom of choice.