

Foreword

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In recent years, value has shifted from goods mainly to information and knowledge, transforming our society into a knowledge-intensive one, where high value is added to all goods and services. In a knowledge-intensive society, future possibilities and options may change depending on the extent of the diversity of knowledge that can be brought together. Therefore, the importance of basic research, an intellectual activity that explores and creates outstanding new ideas, including the pursuit of truths, the examination of basic principles, and the discovery and creation of new knowledge, is becoming more and more important. The accumulation and application of the results of basic research form the basis for social development that could not only resolve long-term social challenges and create new industries but also bring entirely new types of value to our future society and lives.

At a time when economies and societies across the world have reached a major turning point, how should Japan's current situation should be assessed and in which direction should the country go? This white paper provides specific descriptions of the value brought to society by basic research and technologies that support the research by citing example cases.

In order to promptly realize social application of the results of basic research, it is necessary to develop systems that can fully unlock the potentials of knowledge and human and financial resources by allowing them to circulate across the organizational and sectoral boundaries. The white paper provides an overview of various institutional and systemic reforms promoted by the government in order to develop such systems, including legal amendments and tax system reforms.

I will be very happy if the white paper provides you with an opportunity to think once again about the implications and importance of the accumulation and application of knowledge gained through basic research.

It is an urgent task to carry out the reform of universities that form the infrastructure for developing human resources and creating innovations in preparation for Society 5.0 amid the ongoing progress of the aging of society coupled with a low birthrate and globalization. Therefore, the government has adopted the Reform of Higher Education and Research initiative (Shibayama initiative). This is a policy package intended to reform education, research and governance in an integrated manner by providing generous support to the efforts and achievements made by higher education and research institutions and ensuring rigorous assessment while securing opportunities for aspiring young people to advance to higher education. Going forward, we will do our utmost to help universities and public research institutions become a core presence for the creation of a future society by exercising their capabilities to the maximum possible extent.

Finally, we hope this white paper will help all Japanese people to understand the current policies on science and technology promotion and serve as a reference for undertakings by all concerned.