

Foreword

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Almost half a year has passed since the first case of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection in Japan was confirmed. I would like to offer my deepest condolences to the people who died of COVID-19 and my sympathy to the bereaved families and people who are now suffering from the disease. I would also like to express my sympathy for all people who are struggling with various constraints on social and economic activities in their daily lives that have been imposed to prevent the spread of infections. Moreover, I would like to offer my appreciation to healthcare professionals and staff for working day and night in the frontlines of the battle against COVID-19, to researchers in industry, academia and government for bringing together wisdom not only from across Japan but also from all over the world in order to develop vaccines and therapeutic drugs, and to education professionals and staff responsible for nurturing the future generations for doing their utmost in order to create the best possible school environment for the growth of children. All of us within the government will continue to work as one to do our best in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At present, the government is deliberating the next Science and Technology Basic Plan, which will start in fiscal 2021. If we think about the future 20 years from now in 2040, it will become clear which path Japan should take. With that in mind, we have adopted "future society" as the theme of Part 1 in this year's white paper. Regarding how our lives will have changed 20 years later, the white paper does more than just review an accumulation of existing technologies and tries to imagine a desirable society and predict the future. The white paper presents the possibilities and options for the future society based on the "11th Science and Technology Foresight" survey, which was published by the National Institute of Science and Technology Policy in November last year. In light of the spread of COVID-19 infections, the situation of the world has been changing dramatically. We hope that the white paper will help everyone envision a future society.

This white paper is also positioned as an annual report on activities conducted in fiscal 2019 to promote science and technology. In the previous fiscal year, which marked the start of the Reiwa Era, Professor YOSHINO Akira became the first Japanese citizen to win a Nobel prize in the new era. This demonstrated the high level of Japan's scientific and technological prowess to the world once again. In many research fields, while researchers are opening new academic frontiers, research and development activities jointly conducted by industry, academia and government are steadily delivering results in a synergistic manner. To support such activities, the government is improving the research environment by helping to foster young researchers and supporting a diversity of unique basic research projects. At the same time, the government is striving to enhance the diversity of education, which is

a long-term task that should continue to be addressed over the next century for the future of our country. Upholding the vision of "Nurturing the next generation builds our country's future," we will further intensify future-looking efforts.

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