

Keidanren Summer Forum 2020 Manifesto
–Accelerating the Revitalization of Japan’s Society and Economy through
Digital Transformation–

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Keidanren

The COVID-19 pandemic has inevitably constrained various activities in Japan and abroad. As well as impacting severely on people’s lives and the socioeconomic environment, it has highlighted vulnerabilities in societies both in Japan and worldwide.

Against this background, we must now go beyond responding to individual vulnerabilities and take decisive action to radically reform society as a whole, focusing on digital transformation (DX) to realize Society 5.0, a resilient, sustainable, and human-centered society that holds the key to new growth in the post-COVID-19 era.

Now is the time for Japan to marshal its strengths, which include corporate philosophies that respect diverse stakeholders, world-class digital platforms such as supercomputers, and superior energy-saving and environmental technologies. If we do this, Japan can lead the world in bringing about the society of the future.

Recognizing such needs, at today’s Keidanren Summer Forum 2020 we looked ahead to the post-COVID-19 era and shared direction for basic strategy, as outlined below. The business community will demonstrate leadership and, in collaboration with diverse stakeholders, accelerate the revitalization of Japan’s society and economy through DX with a view to realizing Society 5.0.

1. Implementation of Society 5.0 through DX

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the utility and acceptance of digital technologies worldwide. International competition in DX will become fiercer.

Based on our vision for Society 5.0 in the post-COVID-19 era, the business community will promote Japan-original DX (DX that starts from creating value for people and resolving social issues). For that purpose it will lead co-creation with diverse stakeholders—including start-ups creating new business models whose main players are the Millennials, investors placing growing emphasis on ESG considerations, and

universities—to take part in realization of Society 5.0, and promote reform via society as a whole. Moreover, with a view to promoting DX as a national strategy to enhance global competitiveness, we will communicate Society 5.0 domestically and internationally as a model for delivering on the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the post-COVID-19 era, and contribute to resolving a wide range of social issues.

2. Challenge to Realize a Decarbonized Society

A sound global environment is a prerequisite for business activities. Efforts to resolve climate change issues will continue to be a top priority in the post-COVID-19 era.

Businesses, in cooperation with the government, aim to swiftly realize a decarbonized society which is the goal of the Paris Agreement, by accelerating innovation and its social implementation as well as finance to support them, through Keidanren’s “Challenge Zero” project. We will build advanced and resilient electricity & energy systems by promoting the use of renewable energy, nuclear power, hydrogen and other energy sources, as well as establishing a favorable investment environment for the next-generation power grid.

3. Work-Style Reform and Human Resource Development

Recent circumstances have led to the rapid spread of telework, online meetings, and other new work styles, and these will become increasingly established throughout society in ways that enhance productivity.

According to each company’s circumstances, businesses will set up systems of employment and personnel evaluation suited to new work styles. At the same time, business leaders will urge the government to review labor laws, especially those relating to working hours. Through such efforts, we will boost worker engagement and move forward with “Phase II” work-style reforms set out in the 2020 Report of the Keidanren Committee on Management and Labor Policy. Companies will also review their OJTs as well as their training for new recruits, in accordance with the progress of work-style reform, and will cooperate with universities and other institutions to train the personnel who will make Society 5.0 a reality, especially IT and data specialists, and to enhance recurrent education with the aim of spurring employees’ autonomous career developments.

4. Rebuilding of a Free and Open International Order

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the trend towards protectionism and national particularism, and has exacerbated US-China confrontation. At the same time, gaping economic and social disparities within countries have worsened, and this has accelerated socioeconomic destabilization.

Businesses continue to operate based on international rules while paying careful attention to ensuring economic security. We will promote international socioeconomic stability and restoration of the global economy by contributing to initiatives including the establishment of inclusive and resilient framework for trade and investment as well as the resolution of social issues in developing countries.

5. Revitalization of Regional Economies

There is growing awareness throughout society that overconcentration of population and resources in Tokyo and other major metropolitan areas is a risk factor in times of emergency, providing renewed impetus to opportunities for decentralization.

Businesses will make efforts for reinforcing regional business operation from the viewpoint of BCP. In addition, business will strive to strengthen tourism and agriculture using local resources in ways that will induce population flow from large cities to the regions. By promoting innovation and reinforcing regional business operations in collaboration with diverse local stakeholders, they will also open up new paths to regional revitalization through stimulation of production, distribution, and consumption and creation of new value.

6. Addressing Structural Issues in Japan

In the post-COVID-19 era, growth in Japan will be impeded by a range of structural challenges: dealing with a falling birth rate, achieving fiscal consolidation, building national resilience, and rectifying slowness in promoting diversity.

To address these long-term challenges, businesses will resolve essential issues by utilizing digital technologies. Through such efforts we will accelerate the realization of Society 5.0, a more resilient, sustainable, and human-centered social model.