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Global Dialogue on Joint COVID-19 Digital Action Plan

Digital technology is the key to combating COVID-19, and has the potential to maintain economic and social vitality.

The Japanese government is carrying out all measures based on the Special Law to combat the disease in cooperation with all the ministries and government agencies. There are three pillars to this;
- Early detection of and early response to clusters
- Enhancement of intensive care and securing medical services
- Behavior modification of citizens

We are trying to leverage digital technology as an important part of these measures. I would like to explain some of them.

(1)The use of BIG DATA.

Securing social distancing is critical to stopping the spread of the coronavirus.
Japan is also making a strong call for people to refrain from going out to change their behavior, but we should use big data to check the effectiveness of our policies. In doing so, it is critically important to balance this with the adequate protection of privacy.

The GOJ (MIC and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) has asked platformers and mobile network operators to provide statistical data to detect clusters, and to confirm the effectiveness of social distancing policies. In response to the government's request, mobile network operators are providing statistical data on the movement of people based on base station communication data in a form that does not identify individuals. This data is widely available to the public.

In addition, the government, in cooperation with a social media operator with the largest number of users, is conducting a health survey of all users, which is being used to understand the status of infections by region. Also a tracking app will soon be available that provides contact history information via Bluetooth on mobile phones in a privacy-friendly manner.

Our ministry has started to provide people-flow analysis software for developing countries, mainly in Africa. It can detect, for example, the movement of people in specific locations before and after lockdowns are initiated, and has already been used in Rwanda and Angola. It can be used in accordance with the personal information protection laws of each country. I would like to add that this software was developed in cooperation with the ITU. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my gratitude to the ITU.

(2) Enlighten and change people's behavior and movement.

To stop the spread of infections, it is necessary to dramatically reduce human contact, but on the other hand, it is necessary to maintain, as far as possible, various social activities.

Although many large companies have introduced remote work, the rate of adoption by SMEs is less than 30% even in Tokyo. Japan is providing tax and financial support for telework-related equipment and is dispatching advisors to support the introduction of telework by SMEs. There are also private companies that provide free personal computers, telecommunication services and cloud environments.

Concerning education, many universities and schools have been closed and have started remote learning. The government has called on mobile carriers to provide additional mobile phone data allowances free of charge to students.

In addition, in order to stop the spread of infections, including hospital infections, it is necessary to enable telemedicine. The GOJ has reviewed medical regulations to enable diagnosis and prescription by telemedicine from a patient's very first visit.

I would like to introduce another international cooperation project concerning a remote image diagnostic application developed by the Japanese company, Allm, Inc. This application enables a doctor who is treating a patient physically to consult with a specialist who is at a distant location easily using a smartphone by sending CT images, such as the lungs. It has already been used in Brazil and Chile in South America.

In order to eradicate COVID-19, the world should work together to promote Internet access in developing countries. Japan will do its utmost to cooperate.

*The Digital Development Joint Action Plan can be accessed here:

http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/788991588006445890/Speedboat-Partners-COVID-19-Digital-Development-Joint-Action-

Plan.pdf