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View on Year 2005 at the Beginning of the Year

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As we welcome the beginning of 2005, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy New Year. On this occasion, allow me to give a New Year's address with my view on the state of Japan and our industry.

Last year was one in which Japan's economy finally got back on track toward recovery and we glimpsed some good omens for the manufacturing industry, as efforts in reform began to bear fruit.

According to the economic report recently released by the Cabinet Office, an increase in domestic demand will continue to spur economic recovery in the current year.

However, although Japan's manufacturing industry has already developed global production, sales, and services, it must also heed sudden increases in crude oil prices and fluctuations in foreign exchange and must try to be more competitive globally, standing on the advancement of the East Asian economic partnership agreement (EPA), which is now being referred to as a global factory.

Amid global competition that becomes fiercer every day, Japan's government, industry, and academia are asked to collaborate in the strategic fields stated in the government's Science and Technology Basic Plan, including information technology, nanotechnology, materials, and manufacturing technologies. Japan is striving to create more sophisticated innovations by actively promoting R&D.

Fortunately, Japan has managed to preserve an international edge through individual achievements in functional parts, exceptional for the use of special synthesized materials and precision micromachining. The manufacturing industry of East Asia is growing with Japan's advanced parts and materials industry at its nucleus.

By fusing micromachines and MEMS with semiconductor micromachining technology, applied research and development research of these fields have advanced rapidly, attracting much attention domestically and overseas as key technologies for developing new products in automotive fields, information and telecommunication fields, and medical treatment and welfare.

The Micromachine Center has conducted business operations aimed at concentrating the efforts of government, industry, and academia in order to establish and commercialize basic technologies in micromachines and MEMS. Last year, after conducting several studies on the industrialization of MEMS in a joint investigation and research project, we came up with proposals for measures aimed at developing an industrialization foundation and reinforcing the functions of the MEMS foundry. At the same time, we launched the MEMS-ONE project designed to construct a sophisticated, user-friendly software infrastructure for improving the efficiency of MEMS design and development. Together with the foundry service project designed to develop the hardware infrastructure, this project is expected to function like the wheels of a car in helping develop the MEMS industry and restoring Japan to its place as a leading manufacturing nation.

While continuing to base its efforts on trends in such advanced fields as biotechnology, nanotechnology, and information technology, the Micromachine Center plans to explore other technology frontiers with the aim of establishing new basic technologies for next generation micromachines (fine MEMS, nano-microsystems, etc.).

I wish you all continued happiness and prosperity in 2005. Happy New Year, everyone!