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## New Year's Greetings

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I would like to take this opportunity to extend my best wishes to all for a happy and prosperous 2006, as well as express a few thoughts at the start of a new year.

The Japanese economy is currently in a period of gradual recovery centered on private-sector demand. This year – hailed as the year Japan's economy will finally and without fail emerge from the long period of stagnation that has ensued since the economic bubble burst – will also be the year of an “offensive revolution” that will reshape Japan's manufacturing industry anew.

In the 1980s, the United States worried over the twin concerns of budget and trade deficits as the EU and Japan caught up with then overtook its manufacturing industries. This period saw rising demand in the US from the manufacturing world, represented by the Young Report, for measures to strengthen international competitiveness. Various strategies undertaken by the government put American competitiveness on the road to recovery. The Palmisano Report, “Innovative America” – a report claiming that fostering innovation was imperative for America to maintain its competitive advantage – was then released in December 2004.

As the rapid economic growth in various Asian countries enabling them to catch up with Japan, Japan today is now facing the same situation as once faced by the US when Japan caught up economically with it. In particular, the formulation of measures to address intensifying competition with China and other emerging innovation regions – known as the “emerging tigers” – is an important task Japan now faces.

The Third Science and Technology Basic Plan beginning this fiscal year, gives “the importance of human resource training and creating a competitive environment” (from things to people) as the principle that should underlie science and technology policy and the national position to aim for. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry also announced last year “The New Industry Creation Strategy, 2005” devising action plans in seven important fields for the creation of new industries in addition to training and recruiting workers to support competitiveness, creating a common infrastructure to support priority fields, building up advanced material industries that will serve as a foundation for competitiveness in new cutting-edge industrial fields, and establishing policies for high-risk research and development.

Because of their reputation as small, high-precision, low-energy, high-added-value devices key to a diversity of industrial fields such as information and telecommunications, medicine, biotechnology, and automotives, micromachines/MEMS (Micro Electro Mechanical Systems) – the technologies promoted by the MMC – are regarded as vital for strengthening the international competitiveness of major areas within Japan's manufacturing industry today.

Against this background, it has been decided to establish within the MMC in April this year a MEMS Council comprising MEMS-related businesses for the purpose of providing support for the further development of MEMS industries and contributing to the strengthening of the international competitiveness of Japanese industry.

This council will promote activities such as the support of business revitalization through the expansion and strengthening of policy recommendation activities regarding basic issues in order to develop MEMS industries and a foundry service network for building an infrastructure for research group activities regarding important themes and MEMS development, as well as through the establishment of a website for introducing new products and technologies such as MEMS devices, foundries, and manufacturing equipment as a means of encouraging exchange between MEMS businesses.

Your participation in and cooperation with the council and its activities would be highly welcomed and appreciated.

At the MMC, we will continue with our activities – mobilizing industry, academia, and government – with the aim of establishing basic technology for and the industrialization of micromachines/MEMS in order to contribute to the reshaping of Japan's manufacturing industry and to the strengthening and maintenance of Japan's international competitiveness.

In conclusion, I would like to again wish everyone all the best for a happy and prosperous 2006.