

Section 3 On the “Report of the Committee on the Anti-aging society and its basic conditions – Toward self-reliance and mutual support with dignity -”

On 14 October 2011 there was held the “The Aging Society Policy Council” headed by the Prime Minister, where a policy to start working on new General Principles Concerning Measures for the Aged Society was announced. Based on this policy, in the period from 21 October 2011 to 23 February 2012 the “Committee on the fundamental methods to carry out measures for the aging population” (headed by Atsushi Seike, the president of Keio University) was held 5 times, which was summed up in the “Report of the Committee on the Anti-aging society and its basic conditions – Toward self-reliance and mutual support with dignity -”.

This report showed that as the country that undergoes population aging with unprecedented speed, that has the highest aging rate and that entered the phase of super-aging society that no other country in the world has yet experienced, Japan recognized the necessity to develop an aging society where all generations can participate and enjoy an affluent life and first of all changed the understanding about elderly persons’ assumption of “life as 65 years” into “life as 90 years” together with working conditions, social participation, the state of local communities and living environment, provision for old age, etc.

Grounded on this way of thinking, this report classifies problems of Japan’s elderly persons into 6 topics and collates 6 basic approaches to Japan’s super-aging society.

This section will introduce the details of the topics and basic approaches to them.

1 Problems of the super-aging society

(1) The discrepancy between realities and ideas about elderly persons

The baby-boomers who have been playing a leading role in various spheres of society will be reaching 65 after 2012, and they are expected to become leaders of the coming super-aging society making the best use of their experience in various spheres society.

Also, while the average life span in Japan continues extending, it seems that the same rule about all elderly persons as being supported does not apply anymore, because there are more and more people who are still vigorous even after 65 and participate actively in social activities or work.

Judging all persons by age as “being supported” even if they want to work or are

working is thought to lower the pride and dignity of those people.

In addition, the conventional ideas about categorizing elderly persons by age as people aged 65 years or over, treating them all as the ones who need support, are thought to be a chief factor in the obstacles to make the most of abilities and eagerness of elderly persons with different lifestyles.

(2) Inter- and intra-generational gap

It is pointed out that the problem of the current social security system is that it is shifting the responsibility to the future generation. Lest the intergenerational gap gets bigger than now, one of the tasks is realization of a fair “young-old balance” which will satisfy both the elderly persons of now and future generation.

It is essential to keep the social and intergenerational balance by recognizing and getting as much support as possible from people aged 65 years or over who are capable and ready to work, even if they are were conventionally thought as being supported.

Furthermore, not only intergenerational gap, but also the difference in income among elderly persons, that is the intra-generational gap, is bigger in comparison with other age groups and continues to grow.

The social security system is a system that guarantees security for all generations and improves security of each citizen. Social security supports all people, regardless of age or sex, on the other hand, one of the coming tasks is to make everything to let people feel that they really benefit from social security.

(3) Elderly persons’ willingness to work is not satisfied

Environment in which retired elderly persons can continue to work is being developed, but it can hardly be said that all willing elderly persons bring their willingness and abilities into full play, that is why one of the tasks is to promote the realization of a life-long active society.

In addition, the reasons why people want to continue working or participate in the NPO, besides income, differ greatly from maintaining one’s health and staying connected to society to giving a meaning to life. Thinking of the ways to satisfy these desires of elderly people, as well as eliminating factors that stop such desires is another task.

(4) Weakness of fellowship and local community power and isolation of elderly people

Aging progresses in cities and along with the rise in proportion of never married

people, the number of one-person only aging households increases. Amid the rapid economic growth, local communities in both rural areas and cities collapse, with a spiritual loss of regional ties of the community as a whole and a physical loss of infrastructure of living in the community. This is how the issue of social isolation and solitary death appeared amid the weakening and loss of regional and fellowship power, including human relationships in the local communities.

In view of this situation, another task to be solved is how to develop new ties among people of the local communities suited to the coming super-aged society, taking into account the needs and current situation of various elderly persons

(5) Elderly persons feel inconvenience and anxiety about their living conditions

As far as local inconveniences for elderly people are concerned, such topics are listed as daily shopping, visits to the hospital, hard-to-use transportation, etc. Creating an easy-to-live environment with an integral community is another task.

In addition, elderly people often get into trouble or incidents, with changes in the families and local communities, there is an increasing need to build a social mechanism to ensure safety and peace of mind of the elderly.

Furthermore, due to the rise in the number of elderly people, the number of cognitively impaired elderly people aged 65 years or over is increasing, and as in future dementia will become a big problem, creating a system to let people with dementia live without anxiety in a place where they have lived before.

(6) Limits of the system and handling of the conventional "life as 65 years"

There is not enough preparation for old age, including health care, social participation, lifelong learning, etc. from young age. It will be a problem to secure holidays or other time during working years to get prepared for old age while working.

Until now there have been accomplished various kinds of institutional plans and handling based on the assumption of "life as 65 years". In the 20th century as preparation for old age, investing in residential real estate and performing asset accumulation were expected to function as an economic support and social security in old age, but the preparation role is thought to be in a state that is not fully functioning. Nowadays, with the extending average life expectancy and prolonged life, it is necessary to look ahead and promote the preparation and generation circulation for "life as 90 years".

2 Basic views on the coming super-aged society

It is important to build a society which will enhance “self-power”, that is doing things around you by yourself, based on self-responsibility while being active and healthy, where it will be possible to become self-reliant with a vibrant long life, to support and shoulder society with pride and to live with dignity, even when support becomes necessary. Below are basic views on the coming super-aged society which will let all elderly persons live with dignity, by getting rid of the conventional assumption of “life as 65” and assuming “life as 90 years”.

(1) Revolutionary perception of the elderly - “Is a person aged 65 old?”

Thinking of an “elderly person” as needing help is far from the real situation with people over 65 years with will and ability to work, making it disincentive for elderly people who are able and willing to work.

In addition, judging all persons by age as “being supported”, even though there are people over 65 years old among them who act as important leaders and supporters of society, may hurt the pride and dignity of people who want and actually play an active part

When the gap between this understanding and reality is eliminated, along with bringing support to society, it is desirable that people, when support is necessary, could be as independent as possible by the support of those around them, and could live a life with dignity, like any other human being.

In order to maximize the capacity and willingness of elderly persons, it is necessary to change the stereotypical image of the elderly as “people who need support” to a revolutionary perception of elderly persons aged 65 years or over with willingness and abilities as the supporting side. In this way, the transformation of public consciousness about the perception of persons aged 65 or over is indispensable, and enlightenment for it is essential. In that case it is also important to provide information about a variety of role models to spend a happy, affluent and mature life.

On the other hand, based on the purpose of the measures and the current handling in each existing system, including the social security system, it is necessary to take into account ensuring of the safety of future plans and life of people and to consider it from the multilateral perspective, it is important to deepen the public debate as a medium- and-long term problem that will lead to consensus.

(2) Establishment of social security system to ensure safety of old age – a reliable

society of the supported and supporting

From the fact that the nature of public financial support and mutual help with the focus on the social security system has a significant impact on the life plan of each citizen, it is important to change the system in a long-term perspective that allows a review of the life plans there.

Social security system supports the independence of the nation and develops a social infrastructure for a secure life, which requires to go back to the origin of social security and to seek strengthening and restoration of the primary function. It is important to respond to the growing wealth gap by enhancing redistribution of income or expanding the expenditure for raising future generations, to ensure the safety for all generations and to increase the sense of security of each citizen, and it is necessary to build a sustainable social security system of the "support for all generations" type.

(3) Expectations of senior power – promising active elderly persons who can support society

① Realization of a flexible way of working

Realizing a lifelong active society, where active senior people aged 65 years or over possessing willingness and ability can continue working if they want brings income, which will become the foundations of their livelihood, together with health and desire to live.

Physical fitness and motivation of an individual worker in old age vary among individuals, from the fact that households have different conditions, it is necessary to guarantee employment possibilities by establishing a flexible working system - the system that will meet the needs and employment of various elderly persons.

Realization of a diverse flexible ways of working will lead to a comfortable working environment not only for elderly people, but for a child-rearing generation as well. Thus, throughout working life it is necessary to promote the realization of the work-life balance at different stages of life such as child and long-term care.

In addition, making use of the will of the elderly to the maximum will help to realization the smooth transmission of skills on to the younger generation who is essential to maintain the vitality of the company, and achieve improvement of the young generation's abilities.

② The creation of a place with new activities to enable various ways of life

Besides work, in order to make self-realization and meaningful life possible, there is a need to create a place with new activities to enable various ways of life and to tighten

the connection between this place and eagerness.

It is also important to focus not only on the economic side, but on the fact that there are a lot of elderly persons who emphasize the social participation and purpose in life, that is why it is necessary to ensure the opportunity to participate in society without regard to employment.

To activate the social participation that makes the best of the elderly people's autonomy, it is important to create a comfortable place to stay and a chance to reveal themselves utilizing the characteristics of the area, and to promote cooperation among residents, including the elderly.

③ Development and activation of the elderly market

From now on, in order to maximize elderly persons' power it is important to create an environment in which the elderly are likely to play an active part. Specifically, even if physical functions are lowered, with the development of elderly-friendly equipment and services, it is important to maintain the quality of life required by the person and to allow them to live a safe, prosperous and comfortable life.

In order to prevent the elderly from becoming vulnerable in terms of information and communication, it is desirable to promote the use of information systems among the elderly, as well as to make it easy to use devices such as mobile phones and personal computers and help to learn how to use them.

In addition, by promoting the development of services and products based on the needs of the elderly, activation of elderly persons' consumption should be supported by expansion of industries and employment opportunities that correspond to aging.

(4) Realization of stable local communities and strengthening of local community power -Community that makes the best of "mutual aid" –

① Reconstruction of a community through "mutual aid"

It is necessary to rebuild "mutual aid" performed by "face-to-face" cooperation among local people, friends and people of different generations.

In addition, it is important to strengthen the "local community power by utilizing the knowledge and diverse experience of the elderly and promoting the interchange between generations as when elderly people support the families of the young with childcare or other things.

In order to promote mutual assistance rooted in local communities, self-help, mutual aid and public financial support are all necessary. To make self-help and mutual aid easy to provide, it is desirable to create an environment for strengthening fellowship

and local community power by the relevant organizations and groups, including national or local governments.

② Reinforcement of the community in order to prevent isolation

The elderly, especially those living alone, since the isolation in communities is remarkable, should be supported according to their needs in terms of creating communication with the local community and building a bond with it.

In order to prevent the isolation of the elderly and their families in the community, it is important to dispel a sense of despair among people who need social help through individual consultation support or mechanisms to understand the needs by active outreaching inspections.

③ Promotion of the integrated community care system

In order to let the elderly live without anxiety, elderly persons and their families should be reassured by establishing the environment where medical and long-term care is provided in case of emergency, and to dispel the fear that there are no people to respond if something happens. It is necessary to push forward the construction of the systems of medical and long-term care, which will let people in communities to live with dignity.

In the everyday life there is an urgent need in establishing an integrated community care system that will provide consistently, organically and integrally medical and long-term care, prevention, housing and life support services.

(5) Realization of a safe and secure living environment - elderly-friendly society is friendly to everyone –

① Improvement of barrier-free and universal design

There is a need to further promote the concept of the universal design by expanding more the design of houses, cities and living environment, so that a variety of people could easily use it including elderly persons.

It is important to realize the creation of environment in which people can live an independent life and town planning which will allow various people of all generations live without anxiety.

② Security of the everyday life zone living environment

For an elderly person whose mental and physical functions are decreased, there is a need to plan the development of an everyday environment on a territory of about junior

high school district in which they can continue living a safe, secure and comfortable life till the end of their days.

In addition to the convenient living facilities where things necessary for daily life such as shopping can be done, security of living environment that can be used without inconveniences is required, that is medical services, long-term care, and etc. should be placed within everyday life zone.

Besides, various services to support the life of elderly people should be networked on the territory, and it is necessary to create the environment that will be functioning synergistically.

③ Protection from crime and consumer trouble and expansion of adult guardianship, etc.

In order not to let elderly people be victims of abuse, crime, consumer problems, etc., there is a need to promote adult guardianship system and measures against consumer trouble, etc. In particular, with the increase of elderly persons with dementia, the need for adult guardianship has risen even more; it is important to build supporting structure with a focus on “civic guardians” consisting of general public and systematized guardian system including “incorporated guardians.”

In addition, it is important to build communities, which support people with dementia and their families, watch over them and live together in the society as a whole.

Furthermore, to prevent the elderly from becoming victims of malicious dealers, it is also required to provide accurate information, guidance and control of the suppliers. In order not to become victims of crime or consumer trouble, etc., promotion of anti-isolating communication is also important.

6) Realization of generation circulation and preparation for "life as 90 years" from young age - work-life balance and assets to be transferred to the next generation

① Accumulation of human capital and its utilization

Due to technological innovations, there have been changes in the way of working in companies as well, and to continue working in the company lifelong learning and skills development are becoming important. At the same time, for men as well as for women, harmony between work and life (work-life balance) becomes of a great importance with a possibility to choose a balanced combination between work and various life activities such as childcare and long-term care, self-development or local activities.

To work regardless of age in accordance with one's desire, it is important to accumulate working abilities including skills and human network, in order to plan career from young-middle age, including non-regular workers, it is also important to develop an environment in which by career counseling and assistance it is possible to improve one's skills and develop oneself.

Furthermore, even in old age, it is important for an individual to seek for the purpose in life, to be able to demonstrate one's abilities by using to the full diverse social experience, as well as to enhance the opportunities for lifelong learning to live an independent life.

At the same time, it is necessary to deepen understanding about health promotion and care toward old age.

②Realization of a stable post-retirement life by the asset formation and its utilization

In terms of economic independence in old age, to be able to live without worries until the last days it is necessary to make an economic plan to accumulate a proper stock of financial and real assets during working years in order to take advantage of them after retirement.

Thus, for young and middle-aged non-regular workers having difficulty with asset formation, it is important to improve employment stability and treatment and to work in a cross-sectional manner to ensure unbiased treatment.

In addition, to let the next generation inherit the assets left by the elderly properly, we need to build mechanisms to transfer appropriate assets or reflux them to society through the system of donation and inheritance. It is also important to advance markets for existing homes, improving their market fluidity by properly appraising existing homes.

A mechanism of which assets built by the elderly are duly inherited by the following generations, and homes, living environment and asset values are circulated throughout generations is crucial.