Policy Address[*1]

Yoshihito KARASAWA[*2]

Recently the economy and industry in Japan have been significantly influenced by the globalization and serious economic depression that began with the US financial crisis. Although Japan had reportedly recovered from the economic slump following the bursting of its so-called "economic bubble" and the impact of the most recent economic crisis on Japan was expected to be slight, the fact is that our economy has been seriously damaged.

Japan's healthcare system has come under a containment policy for healthcare expenditures for years, which has led to a weakening of community healthcare activities. In this environment, anxiety about the future livelihood of the average citizen has been increasing, especially regarding health and healthcare.

Looking at other countries, it is evident through various sources that the total environment is worsening increasingly on a global scale. In addition to these uncertain factors, a situation is emerging in the fields of securing health and providing healthcare where patient safety is not necessarily guaranteed.

These environmental problems, such as climate change caused by increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide and chemical pollution, are moreover becoming as significant a menace as natural disasters and food safety not only to the current generation, but also to future generations.

Japan is now rapidly becoming a super aging society at a pace experienced by no other country in the world. Japan is not blessed with energy, agricultural, or other natural resources, so we should reconstruct a social security system that is a model for other countries to meet global expectations.

In short, Japan must take the lead ahead of the rest of the world and recognize the fact that we now stand at a crucial juncture where, more than ever, we must resolve all of the critical issues across the fields of finance, economics, and industry.

Within the Japanese healthcare system, we must never lose sight of our vital focus on creating a nation of healthy longevity rooted in the traditions of healthcare and regional culture. Today, as the sense of community and cooperation within Japanese society is waning, I personally feel an especially grave responsibility to create dignified welfare services that enable people to live long, full, and happy lives. This is the primary role of medicine which is a concentration of science, and of healthcare which utilizes medicine to foster human security by protecting human life and health.

The first step towards halting and reversing the declining birthrate is an approach that realizes the creation of a true welfare nation embracing all citizens, one that provides motivation for the elderly, dispels the growing sense of alienation, and ensures that no one, young or old, suffers due to social disparity.

The creation of a high welfare social system providing various peacetime security guarantees in Japan would also prove that we are also capable of contributing to world peace. I am proud to say that the "Grand Design 2009" formulated in February also contributes to the planning of specific national medical policies going forward, based on a wide-ranging analysis of the current situation.

Going forward, the Japan Medical Association will continue to address the vital issue of firmly maintaining the healthcare and national health insurance systems desired by the general public.

We will strive to realize supportive principles through the collective effort of the Japanese people with appreciation for the elderly, national treasures who have long sustained this nation.

And finally, we will create a welfare nation which supports the elderly with dignity and fosters children's growth.