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Legal Regulation and Public Policy for Next Generation Robots in Japan

This presentation intends to provide developers, distributors, and other relevant players in the business related to Next-Generation Robots (hereinafter “NGRs”) with useful information on the legal environment of Japan, which may help them decide on the best options for their activities. Additionally, this presentation aims to facilitate an increase in public awareness of the importance of supporting such relevant players in NGR developments struggling under the current Japanese legal system.

The presentation consists of three parts, firstly explaining the legal status of NGRs in Japan, secondly focusing on the legal regulations in Japan which the developers, manufacturers, distributors, and the operators of NGRs need to consider, and thirdly introducing some policies adopted by the Japanese government to enhance and accelerate the development of NGRs.

In the presentation, NGRs are defined as “robots which share territory of operation with human beings,” in accordance with the definition in the guidelines published in 2007 by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). There are no laws or regulations in Japan which focus on regulating robots or NGRs in general, and neither the term “NGR,” nor the term “robot” is defined under Japanese law.

Who is legally responsible for the movements of NGRs? There are some specific provisions in Japanese law that may be applied to deal with civil liability and criminal liability arising from incidents caused by NGRs. The presentation also refers to case precedents in Japan, which are worth considering in order to minimize the risk of assuming liabilities for damages caused by NGRs.

Furthermore, the presentation provides explanation of some of the laws and regulations in Japan which developers of NGRs need to consider. Issues concerning NGRs and the Road Traffic Act, the Radio Act, the Building Standards Act, and the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Act will be introduced.

Finally, the presentation focuses on some policies adopted by the Japanese government to enhance and accelerate development of NGR, such as the “Robot Tokku” system, a project to promote developments and introductions of robotic devices for nursing care, and the organization of the “Conference for the Auto Pilot System.”

Through this presentation, the audience will understand how NGRs are treated under the laws of Japan, and the fact that the Japanese government is trying to promote the development of NGRs as much as possible within the realm of the current legal system.