Respecting Human Rights

As a company that operates its business globally, NEC is committed to mitigating and preventing any negative impacts its corporate activities may have on the rights of its stakeholders. In particular, by making use of ICT, including social implementation of AI and utilization of biometrics and other data, each and every member of the Group, from executives to employees, shall maintain respect for human rights and view this issue as a top priority, making it a central theme to the Group’s conduct and business practices.

Policy

Embedded in NEC’s Principles is a promise for “Uncompromising Integrity and Respect for Human Rights.” Likewise, our Code of Conduct clearly requires that human rights be respected in all situations.

In addition, NEC has specified “AI utilization with respect for human rights as the highest priority (AI and Human Rights)” as a theme in its “maturity”—priority management themes from an ESG perspective. As such, in addition to compliance with laws and regulations, NEC also plans to develop and supply products and services that are responsive to the different privacy needs of various countries and regions due to cultural perspectives and that are sensitive to human rights issues, such as discrimination. Through these means, NEC will strive not only to minimize adverse impacts on society but also to maximize social value.

Furthermore, we consider appropriate protection of personal information to be our social responsibility, and have established the NEC Privacy Policy.

Promoting Human Rights Due Diligence in Accordance with the UN’s Guiding Principles on Business (UNGPs)

NEC reports its efforts regarding human rights due diligence to the Board of Directors in a timely manner.

In fiscal 2021, we utilized the human rights risk data produced by the international NPO Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) to compile a list of human rights issues and identified the three issues on the right as the most prominent.

BSR also confirmed the specific content of business activities, management systems, and issues directly applicable to 22 divisions at NEC, focusing on the business units in particular and doing so from a third-party perspective. NEC then used the results to update its list of human rights issues to reflect true conditions.

List of NEC’s human rights issues

- New technology and human rights (AI and human rights)
- Labor in supply chains
- Employee safety and health

NEC Group Human Rights Policy
NEC Group AI and Human Rights Principles
NEC Privacy Policy

AI Utilization with Respect for Human Rights as the Highest Priority (AI and Human Rights)

We are also responding to growing concerns about adverse impacts on human rights, including violations of privacy and discrimination that have accompanied the use of AI and the IoT to enrich human life. In 2019, we announced the “NEC Group AI and Human Rights Principles.”

These principles stipulate that all individuals, from officers to employees, are to recognize respect for human rights as the highest priority in each and every stage of the NEC Group’s business operations in relation to AI utilization, such as social implementation of AI and utilization of biometrics, and to take appropriate action accordingly.

In accordance with the NEC Group Human Rights Policy, we are committed to the following three initiatives:

1. Ensure that all products and services are implemented and utilized by NEC employees, customers, and partners appropriately.
2. Continue to develop advanced technology and talent to further promote AI utilization with respect for human rights as the highest priority.
3. Engage with a range of stakeholders to build partnerships and collaborate closely.

Responding to the global spread of COVID-19, in fiscal 2021 we have conducted timely identification and analysis of trends related to the identification and tracking of infected individuals and its impact on human rights and privacy. We reflected the balance between public health and human rights and privacy in the specifications, and provided airports and stadiums with infection control solutions at an early stage.

NEC led team to provide Hawaii’s airports with passenger screening technology

In addition, in fiscal 2021 we continued to hold the Digital Trust Advisory Council, established in fiscal 2020, to enhance our ability to deal with new issues arising in AI utilization. The council provides valuable input from external experts with specialized knowledge on legal systems, human rights, privacy, and ethics on how to use technology in a way that balances public health, human rights, and privacy (as in the example on the left), as well as on issues to be aware of when using cutting-edge technology researched and developed by the Company.

For more details, please refer to the section “Respecting Human Rights” on page 17 of Sustainability Report 2021.