



20th November 2020

Distinguished Minister,

I am writing as the General Secretary of Equity in the United Kingdom; we are the trades union representing performers and other professionals working in the performing arts and entertainment industries. We have been made aware of the situation faced by performers and other freelance working people in Japan by our esteemed colleagues at the JAU, MUJ and MINPO ROREN unions. They are incredible advocates for both the globally important Japanese culture and entertainment sectors, as well as for the rights of artists around the world.

I have a particular affinity with the difficulties faced by the Japanese people during this terrible pandemic, as my brother is an academic at Keio University and has experienced first-hand the efforts undertaken by Japanese government and people to stop the spread of this terrible illness. My thoughts, and best wishes, are with you all.

The measures undertaken by the Japanese government are, we are sure, necessary, to protect public health, but we would hope you would agree that these should not come at the expense of the rich Japanese performing arts sector. Arts are, of course, essentially the extension of the people who create them, and without adequate support, the social and economic damage caused by the restrictions placed on our sector by the Japanese government could be catastrophic.

We are aware that in Japan there are thousands of independent contractors in our industry who have no access to wage support schemes and other forms of financial assistance, including sick pay, that are granted to regular employees in Japan to uphold their income and help them pay their bills. As a result, performers and other freelance workers in the media and entertainment sector are living below the poverty threshold: a large majority of them has seen their income drop by more than 50% since February this year, and an alarming percentage is reporting living on zero income.

With no subsidies or emergency grants available to them, their immediate survival – and that of their families who rely on their already precarious income – is at stake. Those among them who are still fortunate enough to be engaged, have no allowances to turn to when contracting the virus and self-isolating, which is damaging for Japanese society, art, culture and puts individuals in an impossible position.

Unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures, and we would respectfully entreat you to apply similar social security protections for artists, and proportionate investment into your performing arts and entertainment industries so as to save Japanese art and culture into the future for your great nation, and the whole world.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pw Fleming', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Paul W Fleming
GENERAL SECRETARY, Equity (United Kingdom)