



Mr. TAMURA Norhisa
Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare



1-2-2 Kasumigaseki
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-8916
Japan

Dublin, December 1st, 2020

Distinguished Minister,

Re: Desperate state of freelance workers in the arts and entertainment sector in Japan

We are writing to you as we are alarmed by the critical situation that performers and other freelance workers in the media and entertainment industry are enduring today as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the severe measures taken in Japan to contain the spread of the virus.

Whilst we obviously understand that these measures are essential to save lives, we are concerned about their far-reaching implications for 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.

Freelance actors, musicians and technical crew, indeed the majority of the workers represented by the union in Japan, are paying a heavy price for these measures: thousands of productions have been cancelled, or suspended at best, and the revenues that our members dearly counted on to make it to their next engagement have vanished. None of our members have been compensated for this financial loss.

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.

Many countries around the world, including Ireland, Canada, the US, the UK and most EU countries, have taken bold and unprecedented steps to provide comprehensive welfare and revenue protection to all workers during the pandemic, granting independent contractors a similar level of support as they provide to employees. This silver lining has made a huge difference for our members who, despite the precarious situation, have at least been able to cater for their most immediate needs.

Irish Equity and SIPTU, as affiliates of FIA, FIM and UNI Global, stand in solidarity with their affiliated unions in Japan, respectively JAU, MUJ and MINPO ROREN. We urge the Japanese government to hear their desperate call and promptly extend meaningful support measures to all freelance workers in the media and entertainment sector during this crisis.

Regards,

Karan O Loughlin

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