

**CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL OF
CULTURAL WORKERS' UNIONS**
INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ASSOCIATION

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Mr Norihisa TAMURA
Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare
1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-8916 Japan

Moscow, November 20, 2020

Distinguished Minister,

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

I am writing to you on behalf of the Consultative Council of Cultural Workers' Unions (CCCWU) and the Eurasian regional section of the International Federation of Actors (FIA-EA) bringing together several hundred thousand performers, entertainment technicians and media and culture professionals across ten countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Our affiliates 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 sectors 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 performers and other media and entertainment workers in Japan, are paying a heavy price for these measures: thousands of productions have been cancelled, or suspended at best, and the revenues that these professionals dearly counted on to make it to their next engagement have vanished. None of them appears to 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 per cent since last February, 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 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 freelance media and entertainment workers who, despite the precarious situation, have at least been able to cater for their most immediate needs.

CCCWU and FIA-EA stand in solidarity with their sister unions in Japan, notably 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.

Yours sincerely,

Vladimir Kamen
General Secretary CCCWU
Vice President FIA