

14 October 2019

Mr. Koichi Hagiuda, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
Mr. Ryohei Miyata, Commissioner for the Agency for Cultural Affairs

**Statement in Response to the Decision by the Agency for Cultural Affairs
to Withhold Subsidies for the Aichi Triennale**

Sumiko Kumakura
Chairperson
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The Japan Association for Cultural Policy Research published a statement on 9 August, 2019 titled “Statement on the Cancellation of ‘After Freedom of Expression?’ at the Aichi Triennale: From Repression of the Freedom of Expression and Art to a More Developed and Mature Democracy.” In that statement we expressed our belief in the importance of freedom of expression and called for the reopening of the exhibition which threats and intimidation had forced to close. On 25 September the Future of the Aichi Triennale Review Committee announced their decision to reopen the exhibition and the exhibition resumed on 8 October.

On 26 September, however, the Agency for Cultural Affairs issued a press release titled “About the Handling of Subsidies for the Aichi Triennale,” which stated that the formerly approved subsidy of ¥78,290,000 would be withheld in its entirety. Citing Article 6 of the Grant Optimization Act, the press release asserted that the reporting on unforeseeable events in the disbursement application portion of the approved proposal had been inadequate. After a review process that lacked transparency and was out of step with the handling of other projects, they adopted the sudden measure of refusing to disburse the entire amount. The Japan Association for Cultural Policy Research thoroughly rejects this decision. The Agency for Cultural Affairs itself admits that their actions have been “unprecedented.” Their actions cannot but raise grave concern about the lack of propriety and transparency surrounding the situation.

Furthermore, the government is not the only party responsible for cultural policy. Diverse parties such as local governments, cultural foundations, NPOs, and a variety of private entities support the culture of Japan. Many members of our Association comprise the grass roots of cultural policy that supports efforts at the national level. The present incident has come as a great shock to them. We have serious concerns that these actions will have a chilling effect, and create fear that the subsidies for future cultural activities will also be canceled if the activities do not conform to the will of the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

According to the Fundamental Law of Culture and the Arts, culture and the arts “incubate creativity and the power of expression of human beings,” and “provide a ground for people to connect, understand and respect each other, and create a spiritually rich society where people can accept diversity.” In accordance with this Law, the Agency for Cultural Affairs has taken an approach that emphasizes the “arm's-length

principle*” for subsidizing the promotion of culture. The Japan Association for Cultural Policy Research has also been a long-time supporter of this approach. But the Agency’s recent action violates the intent of that approach and we as an Association find it entirely unacceptable. We object firmly to the Agency’s action and demand unequivocally that they rescind the measure.

*The arm's-length principle refers to a concept that the state provides funding while keeping a measured distance from the details of individual projects, leaving decisions on programming and appropriate use of funds to experts.