

# Message

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The National Institutes for Cultural Heritage (NICH) came into being in 2007 through the integration of four National Museums (Tokyo National Museum, Kyoto National Museum, Nara National Museum, and Kyushu National Museum) and two National Research Institutes for Cultural Properties (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, and Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties). With the addition of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI) in 2011, the NICH now comprises seven institutions. This booklet presents an overview of the activities being undertaken by these seven institutions. This year marks an important milestone: the 10th anniversary of the founding of the NICH. The NICH has succeeded in developing into a group of institutions that lives up to its name by playing a key role in the preservation of Japan's cultural heritage; at the same time, each individual institution within the NICH continues to embody its own unique characteristics in the carrying out of its operations.

Implementation of the NICH's Fourth Medium-term Plan began in 2016. During the implementation period, Japan will be hosting several major events, including ICOM KYOTO 2019 and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, which are expected to heighten international interest in Japanese culture. The NICH will be working to ensure that ICOM KYOTO 2019 is a resounding success, while also making full use of this opportunity to actively spread awareness—both within Japan and overseas—of the richness of Japan's history and its multi-faceted traditional culture, as well as to further invigorate museum activities, and foster a more mature understanding of the importance of cultural heritage preservation. To this end, we will be adopting an approach to the management of the NICH museums that makes them fascinating, enjoyable places to visit, for example through the promotion of a multilingual environment, the provision of flexible exhibition-viewing opportunities, etc., as well as redoubling our efforts to provide high-quality services, for example, by ensuring that research outcomes are presented in a way that makes them readily understandable for both Japanese and international visitors.

Based on Japan's experience with the Kumamoto Earthquakes of 2016 and the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, it is clear that some of the most urgent tasks for the NICH include the examination of technical issues relating to the prevention or mitigation of damage to cultural heritage in the event of a large-scale natural disaster, the establishment of a nationwide system for rescuing cultural heritage from the impact of natural disasters, and the promotion of surveys and research relating to the long-term handling of rescued cultural heritage and restoration and repair methods. To this end, I believe that it is important for the NICH to make an effort to further strengthen our coordination and collaboration with relevant agencies, including the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and to implement measures aimed at furthering the development of a cultural heritage disaster prevention network.

Cultural properties are historical and cultural heritage that present the foundations of our country. To help ensure that these priceless cultural properties are properly preserved and utilized, so that they can be passed down to future generations, the NICH will continue to strive for further progress in regard to the collection, safeguarding and display of cultural properties, as well as in the undertaking of related surveys and research, and the dissemination of related information. We look forward to receiving your continued support into the future.