

Message

MATSUMURA Keiji

President

Independent Administrative Institution
National Institutes for Cultural Heritage
(Director General, Nara National Research Institute for
Cultural Properties)



With the enthronement of His Majesty the Emperor and the beginning of the Reiwa Era, the year 2019 has marked the start of a new epoch. The National Institutes for Cultural Heritage (NICH) wholeheartedly celebrate the dawning of this new era, and at the same time we are adopting a new approach to addressing various issues.

This year, 2019, is the final year of NICH's most recent four-year development plan and a number of important events are scheduled.

First, ICOM KYOTO 2019 (the 25th General Conference of the International Council of Museums) will be held in September 2019. Held every three years, this conference brings together museum professionals from all over the world to share museum-related knowledge and information. This will be the first time that the ICOM General Conference has been held in Japan, and the NICH has an important role to play as a member of the ICOM KYOTO 2019 Organizing Committee. The conference is a valuable opportunity to engage in discussions with museum professionals from over 140 countries and regions around the world, and we are encouraging as many people as possible to participate.

In addition, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics will make Japan a focus of global attention and interest next year. To take advantage of this opportunity, a Japan Cultural Expo has been launched this year to raise domestic and international awareness of Japan's history, culture, arts and traditional crafts. The theme for the Japan Cultural Expo is "Japanese people and nature." In order to help the many visitors from foreign countries who will be coming to Japan to experience the unique appeal of the beauty of Japan, the NICH will be playing an active part in the Japan Cultural Expo. We anticipate that, for the people of Japan, the Japan Cultural Expo will provide a marvelous opportunity to rediscover and strengthen awareness of Japanese culture and Japanese concepts of beauty. This year also sees the full-scale launch of the TSUMUGU (Weaving Beauty) Project, which has been organized through collaboration between Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, the Imperial Household Agency, and the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper—the first project of its kind to be implemented through cooperation between the public and private sectors—and the aim of which is to establish and maintain a cycle of conservation, exhibition and restoration for Japan's cultural heritage, so as to ensure that Japan's beauty and culture can be safeguarded and handed down to future generations. The NICH is participating in the TSUMUGU Project.

In addition, in line with the Tohoku New Era Plan which was formulated in FY 2018, the Tokyo National Museum (TNM) is taking up the challenge of undertaking various experimental programs aimed at making TNM a museum that is open to the world, by realizing further enhancement in service quality, creating a more comfortable environment for museum-goers, and promoting the development of a multi-lingual environment within the museum. The NICH is working to promote the adoption of similar initiatives at other NICH institutions. We hope visitors will be impressed by the results of these new projects.

Responding to the amendment of the Act on Protection of Cultural Properties in April this year, we have launched new measures to realize the safeguarding and proper utilization of cultural properties in ways appropriate to this new era in which greater emphasis is placed on the effective conservation of cultural heritage. The National Center for the Promotion of Cultural Properties (CPCP) which was founded in July last year has put in place the necessary organizational structure and systems and is now fully operational.

At a time when disasters of various kinds have been occurring frequently throughout Japan, the National Task Force for the Japanese Cultural Heritage Disaster Risk Mitigation Network (CH-DRM Net, Japan), which has now been in existence for six years, is undertaking surveys and research on various topics relating to protecting cultural properties from disasters and mitigating the impact of disasters. Based on the results obtained in this research, the CH-DRM Net, Japan provides guidance and advice to local government authorities, museums, art galleries, shrines, temples, etc., and also liaises and collaborates with related government agencies, including the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

The NICH will be responding appropriately to the needs of this new era, and will be redoubling its efforts to proactively spread awareness of the value and appeal that Japan's cultural properties possess, and to promote more in-depth understanding of Japanese culture.

We look forward to receiving your continued support and assistance in the future.