

6.4 Billion Yuan for NSFC Projects in 2008

NSFC President Prof. Chen Yiyu announced at NSFC's Sixth Plenary Session of the General Assembly that a budget of 53.59 billion yuan, which is an increase of 25% to that of last year, was approved by the government for the fiscal year 2008. In practice, NSFC, based on the demand of national budgeting reform and the development of basic research, will arrange a funding plan of 6.4 billion yuan.

According to Prof. Chen, 73 800 applications were received from 1570 registered institutions across the country in 2007, which were 6000 more in number (or an increase of 8.9%) compared to that of 2006. Under the funding framework of research promotion, talents training and infrastructure establishment, 14,700 projects from 920 registered institutions were funded, with a total budget of 4.975 billion yuan.

Prof. Chen pointed out that seven key tasks should be accomplished by NSFC in 2008:

I. To fulfill the adjustment of funding structure and make the overall funding arrangement

Based on the application for the Fund and the development of basic research, the phase aim of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan of NSFC will be realized along with the adjustment of funding structure and the improvement of strategic planning.

It will be emphasized to steadily increase the funding of General Program for promoting the coordinated and sustainable development of scientific disciplines and to strengthen the arrangement of Key Program in the priority areas for more opportunities to research in frontier areas.

In order to implement the National Guideline on Medium-and Long-Term Program for Science and Technology Development (2006—2020), it will be stressed to give full play of the guiding role of national strategic needs by linking NSFC's programs with other national key scientific programs and adopting the top-down approach for the Major Program and Major Research Plan.

The development of scientific talents will be continuously placed in the strategic position. The National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars will focus on the training of excellent talents for science and technology. The effective funding mechanism for oversea Chinese scholars will be further improved. The Young Scientists Fund will be continuously expanded. The Fund for Less Developed Regions will focus on the attraction and stabilization of research talents and emphasize its strategic orientation for regional development. The Fund for Creative Research Group will be provided for the development of innovative research teams. The joint funding mechanism will be further improved to induce more diversified resources to support basic research.

As for the international cooperation of NSFC, strategic collaboration will be advanced with the aims at the utilization of overseas research resources and the enhancement of the capabilities of indigenous innovation of the country. Joint research with international partners will be substantially emphasized and international exchange programs be strengthened.

The policy research will be carried out for steadily developing substantial collaboration with the USA, Germany, UK, France, EU, Russia, Japan and Korea, as well as for establishing collaborative channels with other countries.

II. To enhance the construction of regulations and improve the administration

The regulations concerned, including the organizational management, procedures, funding and inspection, will be continuously improved with the implementation of the Regulations on the National Natural Science Fund, and the rules and regulations on the administration will also be revised.

III. To strengthen the construction of the review and evaluation system with credibility

The scientific nature, justice and efficiency of the review and evaluation process will be further enhanced for promoting the credibility of the Science Funding System. The comprehensive checkup of selected reviewers will be implemented for improving and extending the database of reviewers.

The new term of panel reviewers will be selected, the evaluation panels be expanded and the number

of reviewers be increased to meet the new trend of science and funding management. The evaluation system will be improved and the procedures concerned, including avoidance, confidentiality and tenure, be strictly executed. The credit recording system of panel reviewers will be gradually established and the appraisal and monitoring system of the evaluation be explored.

IV. To explore the mechanism of performance assessment for enhancing the funding efficiency

The performance management will be steadily implemented based on experiences of performance assessment of NSFC's scientific departments. The practice and experience of performance assessment of overseas funding agencies will be surveyed and the guideline of performance assessment for the Science Funding System be explored with the emphases on long term scientific values and characteristics of basic research. The international performance assessment of the Fund will be initiated to summarize experience and achievements of NSFC, evaluate its operation and identify the focus of future development of NSFC for continuously enhancing the performance and efficiency of its funding.

V. To strengthen the supervision for promoting research integrity

The spot check of NSFC's projects will be carried out according to its responsibility on supervision and administration endowed by the Regulations. The selective examination of the funding will be carried out with auditing authorities concerned for the safe and legal use of the fund. The role of NSFC's supervision committee will be fully played and its working mechanism be further improved.

VI. To reinforce policy guidance for playing the role of registered institutions

The macro management on the science funding should be established and close strategic collaboration between the registered institutions and NSFC be promoted for the construction of an environment for innovation. The characteristics and laws of registered institutions in practice will be studied and the systems concerned including the reporting system of NSFC programs be further improved.

VII. To intensify the organizational and personnel development for enhancing administration

The organizational structure and management system suitable for the scientific professions and administration will be studied and the personnel reform of NSFC be carried out.