

The Second Plenary Session of the 6th NSFC General Assembly Held in Beijing



The Second Plenary Session of the 6th NSFC General Assembly was held in Beijing on March 24, 2009. During the opening ceremony, NSFC President Prof. Chen Yiyu delivered a work report titled “Strive to Create a New Prospect for the Scientific Development of the National Science Fund” and Prof. Zhu Daoben, Chairman of NSFC Supervision Committee introduced the work of the Committee. Mr. Xu Qin from the State Commission of Reform and Development and Mr. Zhao Lu from the Ministry of Finance

also attended the meeting and delivered speeches. Twenty-three members of the NSFC General Assembly attended the meeting and 16 members of the Supervision Committee were present. The meeting provided the 2008 NSFC Working Report on the Planning and Finance for the representatives to deliberate. The opening ceremony was presided over by Vice President Wang Jie. The members discussed the working reports and approved them through voting. NSFC president and vice presidents attended the meeting and took part in the group discussions. Finally, Prof. Chen summed up the meeting and Prof. Shen Wenqing presided over the summary session.

The main purpose of the meeting is to summarize the agency's funding performance in the previous year in light of NSFC's mission and goal and to figure out the main tasks in 2009 and prospect for the near future as well.

In his summary of NSFC's work in 2008, Prof. Chen pointed out that the year 2008 was the one in which NSFC experienced rapid and sound development. It received 83 877 proposals from 1594 institutions and the number of applications increased by 17.6% over the previous year. It adjusted its three funding pillars, namely, research, talent training and environment building, and selectively funded 17 283 projects in 982 Chinese institutions, with a total funding of 6.309 billion yuan RMB.

In 2008, NSFC made progress in the following aspects: 1) carried out steadily studies and implementation of the scientific outlook for development to further clarify the ideas for scientific development; 2) promoted a balanced and sustainable development of scientific disciplines to optimize the funding structure; 3) played actively the guiding role to strengthen the planning of strategic areas; 4) implemented energetically the scientific talent strategy to improve constantly the talent funding structure; 5) improved the joint funding mechanism to enhance the capability of serving the national innovation system; 6) implemented NSFC's regulations and upgraded gradually the managerial quality; 7) strengthened the establishment of expert system to improve the evaluation and consultation system; 8) expanded and deepened international cooperation to promote steadily substantial cooperation and research; 9) consolidated the inspection and audit to promote scientific integrity; and 10) strengthened internal management and organizational buildup to improve constantly the service capability.

As the driving force of self-innovation, NSFC has helped produce a large number of innovative results. Academician Wang Zhoucheng and Academician Xu Guangxian and their teams, who won the 2008 National Science and Technology Awards, have been granted NSFC fund for many times. All the 34 grantees of the National Natural Science Award have been strongly supported by NSFC. All the winners of the first class prizes of the National Technology Invention Award, and all the grantees of special prizes and most grantees of the first class prizes of the National Science and Technology Progress Award have been supported by NSFC for a long time.

When illustrating the plan for NSFC's work in 2009, Prof. Chen pointed out that it is essential to realize seriously the importance and necessity to enhance basic research, to implement substantially the scientific outlook for development and promote continuously the strategic and forward-looking funding plan.

The priority of NSFC in 2009 will be to coordinate and formulate the funding plan to enhance the effectiveness of science funding. The central government has allocated an investment of 6.4 billion yuan RMB and NSFC plans to arrange a total funding of 7.0 billion yuan RMB according to the systematic reform of the national financial budget and the needs of basic research development in China. Priority will be given to the followings:

1. Promote balanced, coordinated and sustainable development of scientific disciplines, increase steadily the funding level of general projects and strengthen funding for key projects in priority areas;
2. Strengthen the strategic planning of key areas related to the national welfare and the people's live and scale up timely supports to research in agriculture, health, new energy, new materials, information science, public security, etc.;
3. Improve the upper-level design of major and key research plans and play actively a strategic guiding role so as to provide a knowledge pool and science and technology support for the transformation of the model for national economic development and the upgrading of industrial structure;
4. Improve the joint funding system to give full play to the strategic guiding role of NSFC and enhance joint funding for the implementation of major scientific equipment programs;

5. Strengthen the funding for innovative talents, continue to expand the funding scale for young scientists, increase the regional science funding, give full play to the exemplary role of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars to foster high-level scientific and technological talents, and provide steady support to innovative research groups;

6. Carry out energetically international cooperation to further promote strategic cooperation; implement the Research Fund for International Young Scientists to build friendship and bridge for young scientists at home and abroad; continue to promote substantial cooperation with the US, Japan, South Korea, UK, France, Russia and EU, and to explore, expand and extend cooperative relations with foreign science funding organizations and international organizations.

Meanwhile, NSFC shall launch the strategic study for the 12th Five-Year Plan to promote the future development scientifically, and strengthen the management of funding results and performance evaluation for a better way to carry out performance evaluation. It will also promote the formulation of regulations and rules to improve consistently the funding management, strengthen and improve the inspection and auditing to enhance scientific ethics, and to strengthen the agency's internal personnel training to improve the service quality.

Prof. Chen finally emphasized that it is the key task and glorious mission for NSFC to prosper basic research and promote self-innovation to lay a solid foundation for rapid and sound economic and social development of China. We shall stick to NSFC's goal and mission, intensify the interactions with science communities both at home and abroad to create continuously a new situation for the Science Fund and make greater contributions to the enhancement of self-innovation capability and establishment of an innovative nation.

• News & Views •

New Progress in Cell Biology Research

A Chinese research group has achieved new breakthroughs in cell biology research. A new finding from the collaborative research by Prof. Zhu Xueliang, Institute of Biochemistry and Cell Biology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and Prof. Zheng Yixian, Carnegie Institution for Science, was published in the internationally famous online academic journal *Nature Cell Biology*. The finding indicates that both Nudel and cytoplasmic dynein play key roles in the assembly of spindle matrix, regulating the proper formation of mitotic spindle.

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