

Vice President Shen Wenqing Interviewed by Asahi Shimbun



In order to introduce to the Japanese public about the cooperation between China and Japan in basic research as well as the funding policies, layout, effectiveness, opportunities and challenges of the National Science Foundation of China (NSFC), Professor Shen Wenqing, Vice President of NSFC, was interviewed by Mr. Tetsu Kobayashi, chief correspondent of Asahi Shimbun Guangzhou Bureau on January 26, 2011. It is the 2nd interview of Professor Shen by Asahi Shimbun, which is one of the most influential newspapers in Japan with a history of over 130 years since its first issue of publication.

Professor Shen began with reviewing the cooperation between NSFC and scientific community of Japan, gave introductions to various cooperation and exchanges in science and technology including substantial cooperative projects, newly started comprehensive exchange and high-level mutual visits with Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) and Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST), two major funding agencies of Japan. Professor Shen commented: "We have a very good cooperative framework with Japan."

Professor Shen then introduced the funding policies, layout, growth and distribution of NSFC and the consequent opportunities and challenges. He in particular, pointed out that NSFC in recent years attached importance to international scientific and technological cooperation, the fund of which had exceeded the average growth rate of overall NSFC budget.

Professor Shen also shared his views about the rapid S&T development of China over the recent years. He deemed that although China had been ranked among the forefront countries in the number of articles published, but the citation rate was less than the world average and the world-leading core technologies were few in the country. Change from quantity to quality is definitely needed for China. Japan had passed the stage, in the process of which, China needed to learn from Japan.

As for the reform of scientific research system and funding management, Professor Shen said that Chi-

na faces different problems despite of its similarity to overseas scientific research management system. China will make greater breakthrough in funding system, evaluation system, incentive mechanism and output for achievements of scientific research during the period of 12th Five-Year Plan. Science community is supposed to come to consensus step by step through interaction and meet the changes in all aspects. He expressed his willingness to further discuss such issues with Japanese institutions and scholars.

Regarding the question by Mr. Kobayashi on the proportion of basic research to applied research in the funding layout of NSFC, Professor Shen believes that basic science is closely related to social development nowadays. Basic research needs to give more consideration to national concerns, social development and human well-being. NSFC now sets up its strategic orientation of “more emphasis on basic research, frontier research and talents training”. The funding agency will pay attention to basic scientific issues facing our national economy and social needs while attach importance to traditional basic disciplines like mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, earth and biology.

Mr. Kobayashi showed special interest in several ongoing or under-construction large-scale physics experiments in China and believed that some of those researches would possibly lead to Nobel Prize in certain area. With great interest as well, Professor Shen introduced NSFC funded projects like the dark matter research base in Jinping Mountain, Sichuan, the Neutrino Experiment in Daya Bay Reactor, Yangbajing Cosmic Ray Observatory and Shanghai Light Source accelerator.

Professor Shen expressed wishes to Mr. Kobayashi in the end and hoped Asahi Shimbun would do more publicity work for the promotion of Sino-Japanese scientific and technological cooperation.

Officers from NSFC General Office and Bureau of International Cooperation also attended the interview.

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State Councilor Meets with IEC Chairman

On June, 15th, 2011, State Councilor, Madam. Liu Yandong met with Mr. Zare, Chairman of the International Evaluation Committee (IEC) for the funding and management performance of the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC), former chairman of the National Science Board in Beijing. Mr. Han Qide, Vice Chairman of IEC, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of NPC, and Mr. Winnacker, former President of DFG, were also present at the meeting.

Madam. Liu addresses the significance of IEC's evaluation on NSFC's performance on funding and management during past 25 years, which is the first time for the management of the science fund in China. Based on the principles of independence, objectivity, impartiality, and bearing a rigorous scientific attitude, IEC conducted an high-quality, efficient, comprehensive and systematic evaluation, which is not only highly instructive on improving the management performance of the funding for natural science in China, but also sheds light on the scientific management for other sectors concerned in China. NSFC is expected to stage more remarkable performance based on the evaluation results to promote construction, reforms and development of the National Natural Science Fund.

The international evaluation is accomplished in more than one year by an international expert panel of 13 senior scientists from 6 countries.