

NSFC President Attended the 6th Meeting of Heads of Research Councils in Asia



On November 6, 2008, the 6th Meeting of Heads of Research Councils in Asia was held in Jeju, Korea. NSFC President Prof. Chen Yiyu headed a 4-member delegation to attend the meeting. His counterparts, Mr. Hyung-Chul Moon, Acting Chairman and CEO of Korea Science and Engineering Foundation (KOSEF) and Prof. Motoyuki Ono, President of Japan Society for Promotion of Science (JSPS) also headed their delegations at their presence. In the meeting, three organizations presented their own latest science and technology policies and had an active discussion on topics of mutual interests. Renewable Energy was selected by three sides as the theme for the 2009 Northeastern Asian Symposium and the field for 2010 A3 Foresight Program.

(Zhang Yongtao)

The MOU between NSFC and TRF Signed in Chengdu



On September 15, 2008, Prof. Shen Wenqing, Vice President of NSFC, met with Dr. Piyawat Boon-long, Director General of Thailand Research Fund (TRF) in Chengdu, and attended the ceremony of MOU exchanging. This means that the formal cooperative relationship between NSFC and TRF has been established and from now on, both sides will jointly support the cooperation between scientists from the two countries in the fields of natural science.

Prof. Chang Qing, Deputy Director General of NSFC Bureau of International Cooperation, and Prof. Chen Yongjun, Deputy Director General of NSFC Department of Chemical Sciences were at their presence in the meeting.

(Zhang Yongtao)

The First Sino-Thailand Joint Workshop for Natural Products and Drug Discovery Held in Chengdu



The First Sino-Thailand Joint Workshop for Natural Products and Drug Discovery was successfully held in Chengdu from September 16 to 19, 2008. This is the first workshop jointly organized by NSFC and Thailand Research Fund (TRF) under the MOU between the two funding agencies. During the meeting, 30 distinguished scientists from both countries reached several agreements on further cooperation through idea exchange and discussion session. Dr. Piyawat Boon-long, Director General of TRF delivered a speech at the opening ceremony. Prof. Lin Guoqiang and Prof. Chen Yongjun, Director and Deputy Director General of NSFC Department of Chemical Sciences, Prof. Chang Qing, Deputy Director of Bureau of International Cooperation, attended the meeting.

The workshop was hosted by Chengdu Institute of Biology, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Arranged by the local organizer, the Thai delegation also paid a visit to Di'ao Pharmaceutical Company, Chengdu Institute of Biology, CAS and Sichuan Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

(Zhang Yongtao)

Vice President Shen Wenqing Met with US Science Dean Delegation



NSFC Vice President Prof. Shen Wenqing met with an US science dean delegation on 21 October, 2008. Prof. Shen briefed the delegation on NSFC's profile of international cooperation with the United States, followed by discussions on how to better develop China-US collaboration in science and technology and how to encourage US students to do research in China. Dr. Alex DeAngelis, the new Director of NSF Beijing Office, joined the delegation. NSFC staff from the Department of Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Bureau of International Cooperation attended the meeting.

The delegation's visit to China, at the invitation of NSFC, is to attend the Forum on China-US Science Education and Research, which was jointly sponsored by NSFC and NSF. The delegation also visited universities in Beijing, Xi'an, Nanjing and Shanghai.

(Liu Xiuping)

Vice President Shen Wenqing Met with NSERC President



On 13 October, 2008. NSFC Vice President Prof. Shen Wenqing met with a Canadian delegation, which consists of Dr. Suzanna Fortier, President of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), Dr. Martin Godbout, President of Genome Canada, Dr. Paul Hebert, Professor of University of Guelph and Dr. Christian Burks, President and CEO of Ontario Genomics Institute. Both sides exchanged the latest progress on new developments of each organization. The Canadian delegation briefed NSFC on the International Barcode of Life project (iBOL) and the two parties agreed that specific approaches and mechanism should be explored to enhance bilateral scientific cooperation.

The delegation was accompanied by Prof. Zhang Yaping from CAS Kunming Institute of Zoology and Prof. Huang Dawei from CAS Institute of Zoology. Dr. Feng Feng, Deputy Director-General of NSFC Department of Life Sciences, Prof. Chang Qing, Deputy Director-General of the Bureau of International Cooperation and relevant NSFC staff attended the meeting.

NSFC and NSERC signed a cooperative agreement in 1987 and have enjoyed a sound collaborative relationship since then.

(Liu Xiuping)

Vice President He Minghong Met with NSF Inspector General



NSFC Vice President, Prof. He Minghong met with Dr. Tina Boesz, Inspector General of the US National Science Foundation on 29 October, 2008. In-depth discussions were carried out on new progresses in both organizations on financial auditing and countermeasures on scientific misconducts.

Since 2000, NSFC and NSF have maintained a fruitful collaborative relationship featured with constant workshops, seminars and personnel exchanges. Mutual satisfaction on the relationship as well as the willingness to further it was expressed over the discussion. NSFC staff from the Office of Discipline Inspection, Auditing and Supervision and the Bureau of International Cooperation attended the meeting.

(Liu Xiuping)

A NSFC delegation visited the Bioversity International



On 13 November 2008, a NSFC delegation headed by Professor Wang Jie, Vice President of NSFC, paid a visit to the Bioversity International in Italy. The Bioversity International is one of the 15 centers under the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR) .

Dr. Emile Frison, Director General of the Bioversity International warmly welcomed this first delegation from NSFC. Professor Wang Jie praised highly the role of CGIAR in agricultural research in the world and its contribution to Chinese agriculture development. He also expressed the wish to strengthen the cooperation with the centers of CGIAR including Bioversity International.

The meeting was chaired by Dr. Kwesi Atta-Krah, Deputy Director General of Bioversity International. Professor Qing Chang, Deputy Director General of Bureau of International Cooperation, briefed about NSC and its priorities on biodiversity research, as well as the cooperative mechanisms with International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CMMYT) and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) under CGIAR. Dr. Atta-Krah and 5 people presented Bioversity International, 3 major activities of the Center, and on going projects with China. Both sides agreed to hold a workshop in China next year to discuss and select the priority areas of cooperation.

The meeting went well with pleasant atmosphere and fruitful exchange of information. The visit reached the goal as planned and was successful. (Zhang Yinglan)

TRF Delegation Visited NSFC



A delegation from Thailand Research Foundation (TRF) led by Dr. Suthawan Sathirathai, chief scientist of Global Climate Changes of TRF, visited NSFC on November 13, 2008. The delegation consisted of 8 members from TRF, universities and institutes of Thailand.

Dr. Chai Yucheng, Deputy Executive Director of NSFC Department of Earth Sciences, met the delegation. Both sides introduced their own funding status in the field of geosciences, especially in the area of climate change, on which they discussed the possibility of bilateral cooperation in the coming years. A bilateral workshop, which will be held in Thailand next year, was tentatively set on the subjects of regional mode, carbon cycling and monsoon.

NSFC staff from the Bureau of International Cooperation and the Department of Earth Sciences attended the meeting.

(Lei Rong)

“NSFC-IRRI Joint Workshop on Rice Science” Held in Hangzhou



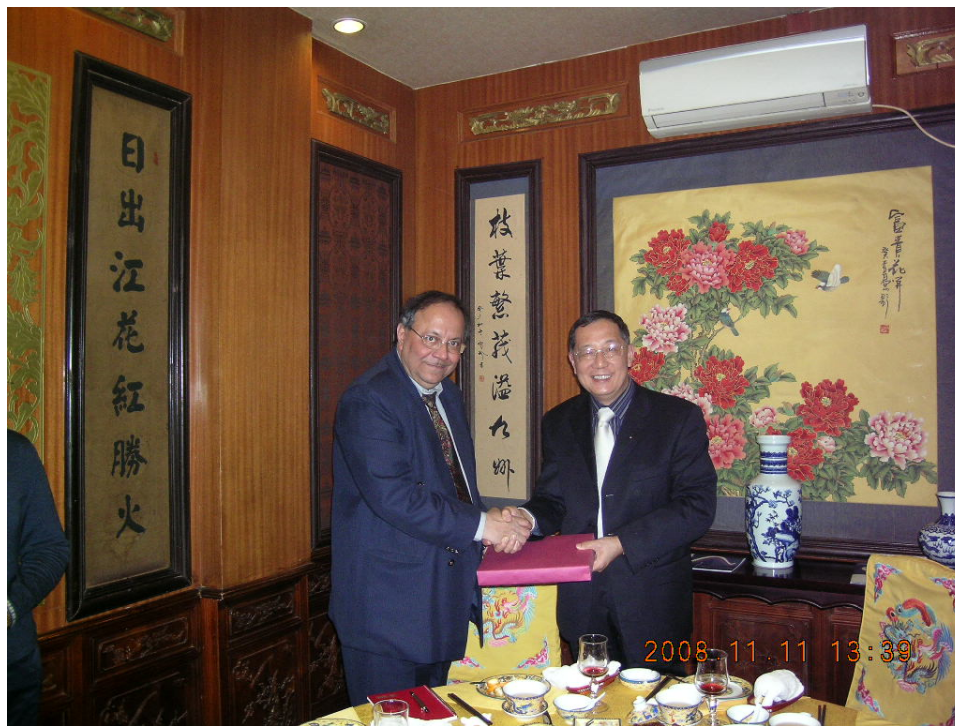
From December 17 to 19, 2008, “NSFC-IRRI Joint Workshop on Rice Science” was successfully held in Hangzhou. The workshop was jointly organized by NSFC and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), and hosted by China National Rice Research Institute.

NSFC and IRRI signed the MOU in 2000 and reached an agreement in 2007 to jointly fund cooperative research projects. According to the agreement, both sides will co-support two major international cooperation projects each year starting from 2008. The purpose of this workshop is to build relationship and promote the cooperation between scientists from NSFC and IRRI. More than 40 scientists from over 20 Chinese universities and research institutes and 15 IRRI scientists made extensive communication on Physiology and breeding, Gene discovery, and Disease and insects. Many consensuses were reached in the meeting which established a good foundation for NSFC and IRRI to jointly fund cooperation research projects between scientists.

As the head of IRRI delegation, Dr. Achim Dobermann, Deputy Director General of IRRI, addressed at the opening ceremony. Prof. Chang Qing, Deputy Director General of The Bureau of International Cooperation, NSFC made an opening remark and gave a presentation on “Arrangement and Objectives of the Workshop and the Introduction of NSFC International Program”. NSFC staff from the Bureau of International Cooperation and the Department of Life Sciences attended the meeting.

(Lei Rong)

Vice President Shen Yan Met with CSIR Director General



On November 11, 2008, Professor Shen Yan, Vice President of NSFC met with a CSIR delegation headed by its Director General, Professor S K Brahmachari, who came to China to participate in "Academic, Research institution & National Innovation systems symposium". They discussed issues of cooperation between two organizations.

As the former director of Institute of Genomics & Integrative Biology (IGIB), Professor S K Brahmachari visited NSFC on May 28, 2004. He and Professor Yang Huanming from Beijing Genomics Institute jointly organized two bilateral workshops in Hang'zhou China (2004) and New Delhi (2005) respectively. In his second year being the Director General of CSIR, Professor S K Brahmachari has many new ideas and suggestions on cooperation with China. The meeting went well with warm atmosphere and friendly discussion.

NSFC staff from the Bureau of International Cooperation attended the meeting.

(Lei Rong)

Vice President Shen Wenqing Met with IFREMER Delegation



Prof. Shen Wenqing, Vice President of NSFC, met with President of French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (IFREMER) on November 18, 2008. Prof. Han Jianguo, Director General of International Cooperation Bureau and Prof. Chai Yucheng, Deputy Director of the Earth Science Department also attended the meeting.

Prof. Shen first expressed welcome and stressed on the importance NSFC maintaining a closer cooperation with IFREMER. Prof. Lu Rongkai, Division Director of International Cooperation Bureau and Prof. Chai Yucheng then made introductions on NSFC, its international cooperation, as well as its funding in marine science. Mr. Philippe Lemerrier, Director of IFREMER International Section, also briefed about IFREMER and its latest development. Both sides later discussed issues concerning how to expand the cooperation in marine science within the existing framework of bilateral agreement.

NSFC and IFREMER signed MOU in 2000, based on which a new scientific agreement on marine science and marine resources was renewed in 2006. Both sides have maintained a sound collaborative relationship since the year 2000.

(Fan Yingjie)

Vice President Shen Wenqing Met with ANR President



On November 19, 2008, Prof. Shen Wenqing, NSFC Vice President, met with Dr. Jacques Stern, the visiting President of the French National Research Agency (ANR). The Attendees from NSFC were Mr. Zhang Zhaotian, Deputy Director-general, and Mr. Liu Ke, Director of Division from the Department of Information Sciences, and Mr. Lu Rongkai, Director of Division of the Bureau of International. The meeting was followed by a lunch at NSFC.

Prof. Shen extended a welcome to Dr. Stern and introduced to the guest the latest development of NSFC. Then Mr. Lu Rongkai, Mr. Zhang Zhaotian and Mr. Liu Ke gave brief introductions about NSFC and its international cooperation, the funding in the department of Information sciences and its related scientific divisions. During the meeting, both sides reviewed the progress in bilateral relations since their first contact in 2007 and showed their satisfactory with the development of cooperative relations since the bilateral agreement on cooperation was signed this year. They also expressed their wishes and confidence for further cooperation in the future.

NSFC and ANR signed, on January 22, 2008, the Agreement on Cooperation and the Memorandum of Understanding on Joint Calls for Joint Research Projects. According to the Memorandum. A joint call will be launched annually for joint research projects. The themes of the calls will be jointly decided by both sides. In 2008, a joint call was launched in Information and Communication Technology and Engineering and Material Sciences (including Nano Science). Three joint research projects were funded after discussion between NSFC and ANR on the basis of peer review.

(Lu Rongkai)

NSFC Supported CERN LHC Accomplished Start-up in September, 2008

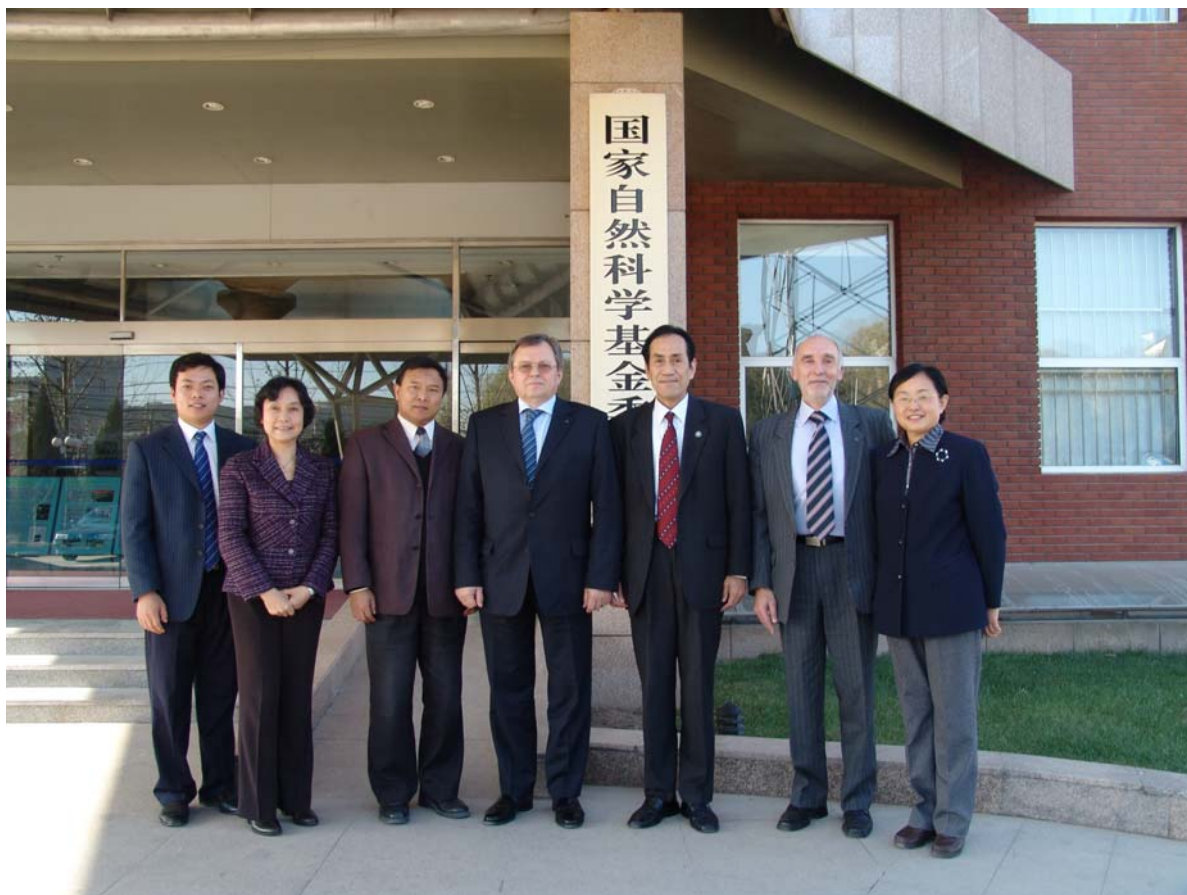
After 15 years of construction, the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), the world's largest and highest-energy particle accelerator accomplished its start-up on September 10, 2008. Scientists predict that this historical event will be a milestone on physics research.

The construction of LHC started in 2003, and more than 3000 scientists from 80 countries and regions participate in the collaboration of this research project. The LHC is the world's highest energy particles accelerator with 26.659-kilometer accelerator ring which spans the border between Switzerland and France about 100 m underground. Scientists hope to discover the Higgs boson and other unsolved myths under the highest energy generated by LHC.

Since 1999, the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC), Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) have been jointly providing support to Chinese scientists for participating in the cooperation for R&D and construction of the two experiments of CMS (Compact Muon Solenoid) and ATLAS (A Toroidal LHC Apparatus) in LHC. Chinese scientists successfully fulfilled their tasks undertaken.

(Zhang Yongtao)

NSFC President Chen Yiyu Met with RFBR President



NSFC President Prof. Chen Yiyu met with President of Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR), Prof. Vladislav Ya. Panchinko and Prof. Vladimir Kovalev, Director of Department of International Relations of RFBR on November 22, 2008. Both leaders briefed the latest developments of respective organization and discussed the issues of science fund management, strategies and priorities of disciplines, etc., and expressed satisfactory regarding the friendly and fruitful cooperative relations that have been established between NSFC and RFBR since long. Consensus was reached to further explore possibilities to foster collaborations between young scientists by holding joint workshops on specific topics with common interest.

Prof. Panchinko is Academician of Russian Academy of Sciences, who took the position of President of RFBR in August 2008. He also has long been involved in Russia-China cooperation as a physicist.

NSFC staff of Department of Information Sciences and Bureau of International Cooperation attended the meeting.

(Chen Huai)

Vice President Shen Wenqing Attended the Second Meeting of ASIAHORCs



Prof. Shen Wenqing, Vice president of the National Natural Science Foundation of China, attended the second meeting of ASIAGORCs in Japan which was held from Nov.27 to 28, 2008 and delivered his speech entitled “Regional scientific collaboration in the era of globalization of science and research”.

The theme of this meeting is to “create a shared vision for advancing science and technology within Asia and establish a support framework for nurturing and sustaining collaboration among the member countries.” In his speech, Prof. Shen introduced the current development and international strategy of the Foundation, as well as his suggestions on the regional scientific collaboration and expectation on the ASIAHORCs. Representatives from member countries made speeches on the science and technology and funding policy in their respective countries. During the discussion, they gave their views on the ASIAHORCs, the development of regional collaboration, priorities and budgeting sharing as well as joint projects in the regional cooperation. Prof. Shen set forth the Chinese position on the topics concerned.

At the opening section of the meeting, Dr. Makoto Kobayashi, Executive Director of JSPS and Professor Emeritus of High Energy Accelerator Research Organization delivered his keynote speech. All representatives were invited to visit the University of Tokyo after the meeting.

Representatives attended at the meeting come from the National Natural Science Foundation of China, Department of science and Technology of India, Indonesian Institute of Sciences, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Korean Science and Engineering Foundation, Council of National University in Malaysia, Department of Science and Technology of Philippines and Agency for Science and Technology and Research of Singapore. Representative from the Ministry of Science and Technology of New Zealand was there as an observer. Representatives from the National Research Council of Thailand and Vietnamese Academy of Science and Technology were absent.

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 1,570 registered institutions across the country in 2007, which were 6,000 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.