

China's Largest Remote Sensing Research Institute Opens in Beijing

On April 22, 2013, the CAS Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth (RADI), China's largest in the field, convened a meeting to mark its formal inauguration. Its title plate was jointly unveiled by senior officials, including Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) WANG Qinmin, CAS President BAI Chunli, former Chinese S&T Minister XU Guanhua, CAS Vice President YIN Hejun, CAS Member SUN Honglie and RADI Director-General GUO Huadong.

At the inauguration, Director-General Prof. GUO Huadong, a CAS Member, delivered a report on the establishment of the new institute. He pointed out that, as a comprehensive research establishment directly under the CAS, RADI was set up through consolidating two CAS institutes: the Institute of Remote Sensing Applications (IRSA) and the Center for Earth Observation and Digital Earth (CEODE). It aimed to make an innovative contribution to the national strategic requirements and promote academic progress by exploring leading technologies in Earth observation, geospatial information science, and the mechanisms for acquiring and distributing remote sensing information; constructing and operating major Earth observation facilities and a space-air-ground Earth observation technology system; and enhancing its capacity for providing resource and environmental spatial information at regional and global levels by creating a Digital Earth scientific platform.

Guo said the founding of RADI was a major strategic move by the CAS, which was conducive to pooling CAS resources in the field of remote sensing and Digital Earth and creating a complete scientific value chain consisting of basic research into Earth observation, its technological development, and its demonstration and application. At the national level, it would do a better job in providing spatial



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information to address priority national requirements, render S&T support to the development of China's airborne and spaceborne remote sensing technology, and offer basic data services to users in China and beyond. It would contribute to CAS space science and technology progress by providing basic scientific data to high-technology institutes for their research and development of sensors, and serve scientific research in the field of earth sciences by offering technologies, methodologies and data to research institutes in the fields of resources and the environment. The move would strengthen the leading role of CAS in the field, and lay a solid foundation for improving its international competency and world-class achievements.

Guo stressed that RADI had made remarkable progress in five aspects: strategic planning; institutional and system restructuring; human resource development; scientific research and facility advancement; and research campus building. The institute had clarified its strategic positioning, and identified targeted future breakthrough progress and research directions. It had a team of almost 700 researchers or engineers, including more than 100 research professors

and more than 170 associate research professors and their equivalent. With one postdoctoral program and six doctoral and master's programs, it currently has more than 500 graduate students. RADI boasted a galaxy of remote sensing resources in China. It housed nine laboratories or research centers at national or CAS level, two national key facilities for spaceborne and airborne Earth observation, and four institutions or programs supported by the United Nations or UNESCO.

He demonstrated the capabilities of his institute: the capacity for the acquisition and processing of air-space-ground remote sensing data; the capacity for conducting basic research into remote sensing science and geospatial information science; the capacity for analyzing global environment and resource information on the platform of Digital Earth science; and capacity for international cooperation with a complete spectrum of academic disciplines.

In his report, Guo also outlined a vision for the development of the institute, saying the job of the CAS was to address frontier issues and RADI's philosophy was to lead scientific development in the field of remote sensing and geospatial information science, to boost RADI's spatial information capacity to safeguard national interests, and to serve global sustainable development, earth science and "future earth" with remote sensing and Digital Earth.

The ceremony was attended by more than 600 people, including senior officials from government departments, renowned scientists from institutes and universities and representatives from international organizations. Key speakers at the meeting included Vice Chairman of the National Committee of CPPCC WANG Qinmin, CAS President BAI Chunli and former Chinese Minister of Science and Technology XU Guanhua.

In his speech, Mr. WANG Qinmin said that near-real-time and high-quality spatial data products provided by

Earth-observation-oriented space technology were urgently needed for socioeconomic growth, science development and eco-environmental protection.

He raised the hope that RADI would boost the development of a Digital Earth science platform so as to provide spatial information on global environment and resources and facilitate the construction of the national infrastructure and technological system for air-space-ground Earth observation.

Prof. BAI Chunli spoke positively of the progress made by RADI, emphasizing its important role in monitoring and analyzing conditions in Lushan County after it was hit by a recent earthquake. He said it was the CAS mission to become a unique, high-performance national research institution that lived up to the expectations of the nation and people. The value of RADI in socioeconomic development had increasingly been evident. He put forward three proposals to RADI: to make concerted efforts toward breakthrough progress in line with cutting-edge developments in science, the national economy and living standards; to actively promote coordinated innovation by running the institute in an open-minded way; and to develop the institute through human resources development.

RADI would further strengthen the comprehensive advantages of the CAS in the field, with the hope of promoting S&T reform and embarking on the road of successful development.

At the meeting, members of the RADI committees for academic affairs, academic degrees, international experts, technological engineering and users received their certificates. The First Session of the RADI International Expert Committee was also took place. Chaired by XU Guanhua, the committee has two vice chairs: Prof. John Townshend, from the US, and Prof. GUO Huadong. Of its 45 members, 26 are from outside China. (Adopted from a report of the 2nd Issue of RADI Newsletter)

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