

Answer Common Challenges and Promote Shared Development

— Science and Research Organizations in Belt and Road Regions Vow to Strengthen Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation

By SONG Jianlan (Staff Reporter)



How to achieve green, quality and sustainable development against the backdrop of global change, stringent natural resources and increasing population pressure, has become a common challenge for many countries – the same for countries involved in the “Belt and Road Initiative”, a grand initiative proposed by Chinese President XI Jinping to promote shared development of countries along the belt-like regions spanning along the historical silk road and maritime silk road, known as trading passages connecting China to the West in ancient times. As an effort by the science community to answer the common challenges to shared development, on November 7 and 8, 2016, leaders and representatives of over 20 national scientific and research organizations from countries along the “Belt and Road” (B&R) regions convened in Beijing at the “First International Science Forum of National Scientific Organizations on the Belt and Road Initiative”, to address issues concerning cooperation in science, technology and innovation (STI).

More than 350 scientists from about 40 countries around the world, including two Nobel Prize laureates

and over 30 academicians of national academies of sciences attended the Forum, which was jointly organized by 12 scientific and research bodies, namely the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS); the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Kazakhstan; the Kyrgyzstan Academy of Sciences; the Tribhuvan University of Nepal; the Pakistan Academy of Sciences; the Polish Academy of Sciences; the Russian Academy of Sciences; the University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka; the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan; the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences; the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) for the advancement of science in developing countries.

At the Forum, delegates discussed and brainstormed how the scientific community could best contribute to satisfying the needs of countries in the B&R regions, what mechanisms and modes of cooperation shall be introduced, what areas of cooperation shall be given priorities, and how to best align the cooperation opportunities between the parties for mutual benefits and interests.

CAS President BAI Chunli addresses the opening ceremony.





Aiming at Win-Win Development

The “Belt and Road Initiative” is the biggest overarching international cooperation initiative that Chinese Government has ever proposed, and reflects the common aspiration of both China and much of the world for development, introduced Professor BAI Chunli, President of CAS in his brief welcoming address at the opening ceremony. “With this initiative, China hopes to share development opportunities and experiences with the rest of the world for win-win development and common prosperity. The similar development status and common characteristics between China and much of the world provide tremendous common ground for mutually beneficial cooperation and progress,” he added.

There is also an increasing consensus that science, innovation and international scientific cooperation play a particularly important role in the Belt and Road development, he went on, and indicated that science and innovation make a major driver for social economic development. “The significant role it plays in this aspect is ever growing in today’s ever-changing economy and rapid transformation of innovation landscapes,” he emphasized.

“Science and innovation not only holds the promise of solutions to a lot of the complex common scientific challenges in the development of the Belt and Road, but can be of significant value to the upgrade of the capacity and quality of the connectedness and cooperation between China and the countries along the Belt and Road regions

in policy, infrastructure, transportation, trade and asset, and people to people dimensions – all the key aspects of emphasis in the development,” he said.

Therefore, BAI urged, scientific and research organizations, the national entities in particular, should take a leading role in this regard. Scientific organizations and scientists and experts from diverse backgrounds should enhance their efforts and cooperation in developing the communities of common interests, responsibility and goals, and in providing strong scientific basis for the Belt & Road construction, he advanced.

Declaration for Enhanced STI Cooperation

The countries in the Belt and Road are facing a wide range of shared challenges, regardless of their diversity in terms of culture, history, natural environment, and correspondingly, different economies and social policies. With a common understanding of the important role STI can play in achieving sustainable, quality development, the delegates reached the agreement that involved organizations shall deepen their cooperation in a sustained and systematic way to address these challenges. Meanwhile, they felt obligated to establish a strong scientific basis for the sake of shared and sustainable development.

As a result, the Forum arrived at consensus to release a declaration expressing the willingness of participating parties to enhance cooperation in STI, and their

A view from the Forum.



commitment to establishing bi-lateral and multi-lateral mechanisms to ensure enhanced cooperation.

In their statement named “Beijing Declaration”, the signing parties agreed that national and regional scientific organizations should enhance their efforts to mobilize and unify scientists and experts from different disciplines in cooperation to meet the major needs and common scientific challenges for the realization of green, quality and sustainable development, and emphasized that particular attention should be cast to the involvement of young scientists as well as adequate representation of women scientists. The signing parties also vowed to ensure the conduct of responsible science and endeavors to provide strong support to science-based policy making. Moreover, they agreed, national and regional scientific organizations, scientists and experts from different fields need to strengthen cooperation by sharing information and joining efforts to supply for continuous and strong scientific support to the shared development and common prosperity.

Particularly, to ensure enhanced S&T cooperation across borders, the statement stipulated to hold the Forum every other year, and to organize or support research programs in areas of strategic importance to the development of involved countries.

CAS and B&R

CAS has attached much importance to S&T cooperation with developing countries to help advance

science, education and help capacity building in science research in the South since 2012, when the 23rd General Assembly of TWAS held in Beijing. Since 2013, the Academy has established a comprehensive system for S&T cooperation, integrating talent training, platform building and project operation/management. Highlighted among its efforts are overseas bases for science and education; CAS-TWAS Centres of Excellence set up for different disciplines including space technology for disaster mitigation, green technology, climate and environment sciences, water and environment, and biotechnology; and scholarship programs represented by CAS President Scholarships, which offers 200 full scholarships per year to overseas students.

Now S&T exchanges between CAS and B&R countries have mounted to over 20,000 person-times a year. So far the Academy has supported over 600 students from such countries for study in China, touching almost all disciplines covered by CAS; set up seven overseas bases for science and education; and co-operated with TWAS five centres of excellence.

Notably, in its newly mapped out “13th Five-Year Plan”, CAS attaches priority to S&T cooperation with B&R countries. With its well-established long-term mechanisms and cooperation networks, and the alliance of scientists from B&R countries in view, CAS has set to join hands with the involved organizations and scientists to tackle common challenges for shared development of the B&R regions.

A view from the closing ceremony.

