

CHINESE VICE PRESIDENT ASTRONOMY LAUDS SOCIETAL BENEFIT OF ASTRONOMY

In a landmark speech at the opening of the 28th General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union at Beijing, Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping emphasized the importance of funding astronomy and its use as a tool for development. Xi Jinping is widely expected to be the next President of China. In his speech, entitled “Exploring the Vast Universe Hand in Hand, Working towards a better future for Humankind”, Vice President Xi, who has a doctorate in chemical engineering lauded the contribution of pure science to society and in particular of astronomy. Some notable quotations from his speech follow.

“Astronomy, as the science to explore the universe, is one of the most important and the most active scientific frontiers that has pushed forward natural sciences and technology, and led to the advances of modern society. It has tremendously important influences on the progress of other branches of natural science and the development of technology. The vast expanse of space always stirs the curiosity of human beings on the earth, fascinates them, and has attracted generations after generations to devote themselves to the exploration of the universe.

The advancement of astronomy is the result of the efforts of all humankind, and manifests the wisdom of humanity. The history of its development has offered us very valuable and profound enlightenment.

- First, to achieve sustainable eco-social development and wholesome development of human beings, it is critical to rely on scientific progress and technological innovation.
- Secondly, the development of science and technology requires persistent exploration and long-term accumulation. Only working in full devotion, exploring with never-ceasing steps, furthering continuously on the shoulders of giants, can one reach the pinnacles of science and drive the progress of humankind.
- Thirdly, the development of science and technology requires to continuously emphasize and strengthen basic research. Astronomy as an observational science is a very crucial field of basic research. Such a field requires strategic plans for deployment in advance, with full respect to the internal logic of research activities and their long-term benefits. We will make larger and larger investments in such a field and ensure their execution, provide long-term and stable support to scientists, so that the scientists can discover, invent, create, and advance constantly, and make more and more achievements that will benefit humankind.
- Fourthly, the development of science and technology requires broad and sound support from the public. Science and technology are a noble course

that both benefit and rely on society, and the full development requires not only public understanding from all sides, but also the active participation of the public. Public outreach should be given equal emphasis as scientific research to educate the public, so as to create a positive atmosphere for the public to respect, love, learn and use science, and to inspire the creativity for science and technological innovation among the public.

- Fifthly, the development of science and technology requires extensive international cooperation. Science and technology have no nationality! The vast expanse of space is the common home of all humankind; to explore this vast universe is the common goal of all humankind; astronomy in fast development is the shared fortune of all humankind.

This convention, I believe, will inspire curious youngsters from all over the world including China to cast their attention and desire to the vast universe, and motivate them to devote themselves to the observations and studies in astronomy, and to science and technological innovations.”

His complete speech can be found at

<http://info.bao.ac.cn/download/astronomy/IAU2012/newspaper/1Hissue03.pdf>

Figure Caption: Xi Jinping, Vice President of the People's Republic of China at the inauguration of the 28th IAU General Assembly