

## What can I expect from the IAP/World Economic Forum's Young Scientists Conference in Dalian?

### *A view from the Young Scientist mentors*

#### **Some history**

The World Economic Forum, a not-for-profit organisation founded in 1971, is probably best known for its annual meetings of global business, political and intellectual leaders held in Davos, Switzerland. In 2007, it launched the "Annual Meeting of the New Champions" series (also known as the "Summer Davos" meetings), which are held alternately in the north-eastern Chinese cities of Tianjin and Dalian. These summer meetings focus on rapidly developing companies, particularly from the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China), and include separate "communities" of Young Global Leaders, Technology Pioneers, Social Entrepreneurs, and Young Scientists.

In 2008, the World Economic Forum invited IAP: *the global network of science academies*, to select a group of young scientists to attend that year's Summer Davos meeting. IAP, a network of more than one hundred national science academies, issued a call to its member academies to nominate promising young scientists to attend on the basis of both their professional record and commitment to public service through science. Following the success of the first experiment the Forum/IAP's venture with young scientists has been repeated every year since then.

Some of us who have attended previous meetings as Young Scientists have been asked to return this year as Mentors. We've prepared this short note to give you some idea of what to expect in Dalian.

#### **What is the meeting about?**

The Summer Davos meetings focus on global business and many of the attendees are CEOs or other senior representatives of large companies. Governments and media organisations from around the world are also strongly represented. Science and technology are recognised as essential inputs for economic and social growth and development, and these areas are represented by the technology pioneer, young global leader and young scientist communities.

Compared to the scientific conferences that most of us are familiar with, the agenda of the Forum's meeting is broad and open-ended.

There are excellent opportunities to meet a wide range of people from many fields: business, finance, local and national government, the media as well as your fellow young scientists. Our experience was that even the most senior attendees were very approachable, easy to talk to and often interested in our views as young scientists.

**Do remember to bring plenty of business cards!**

#### **What is the structure of the meeting?**

The meeting consists of a large number of parallel sessions. The content of these varies widely from conventional lectures by invited speakers, panel discussions, workshops and open forums. Many of the sessions actively involve the audience in break-out discussions.

Attend as many activities as you can and don't be afraid to express an opinion!

There are also plenty of unstructured opportunities to meet and talk to people in the breaks between sessions and at meal times, as well as any time you wish we have a private lounge available this year, next to the other communities. Feel free to use this space, and interact with young scientists. We plan to have a Mentor in the lounge during most intervals to answer queries, etc.

The timetable for the meeting is very intensive. In our experience, the activities ran from breakfast until late at night every day. Try to arrive in Dalian feeling rested and be prepared to catch up on sleep on the flight home!

## Who will attend?

(From the Forum's website)

- **Global Growth Companies** – demonstrating the potential to become leaders in the global economy based on their growth record, business model and industry leadership
- Chief executives, chief technology officers and chief economists from the Forum's **Member and Partner companies**
- **Young Global Leaders** – a multistakeholder community of young leaders providing insight into the priorities and expectations of future generations
- **Public figures** – particularly the heads of government and ministers of energy, science and industry
- **Faculty and Global Agenda Council members** – generating insights through their thought leadership and interdisciplinary collaboration
- **Media Leaders** – publishers and editors-in-chief, top columnists and economic editors
- **Technology Pioneers** – companies involved in the development of lifechanging technology innovations
- **Young Scientists** – exceptional young researchers from around the world that have produced groundbreaking work in different scientific fields
- **Social Entrepreneurs** – leaders of the most innovative business solutions and partnership models driving social change

## Young Scientist activities

You should already have received a detailed outline of activities especially organised for the Young Scientists attendees. Plan to attend ALL of these activities, as much of the “output” from the meeting (new ideas, recommendations to policy-makers, etc.) results from such activities. We recommend thinking about the meeting topics, described below, in advance to have some ideas that you'd like to see emphasized in the outcomes from the meeting.

In addition to the meeting sessions, you will have plenty of opportunities to chat with your fellow scientists over meals, time in the evenings, bus rides, etc. The event is a unique opportunity to meet young scientists from all over the world.

At each of the previous meetings, the Young Scientists collectively took actions to produce a legacy to carry on after the meeting. 2008 produced the Tianjin Statement, “Passion for Science; Passion for a Better World” (<http://www.interacademies.net/File.aspx?id=8632>); 2009 saw the launch of the Global Young Academy (GYA), which aims to be the voice of young scientists around the world; 2010 resulted in the Young Scientists Ambassador's program (<http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~miller/YSAP/>), designed to support non-traditional interactions between countries at different stages of development. We strongly encourage you to think about what legacy you would like to leave this year to record your participation in the Dalian meeting.

## Themes of the meetings

This year's theme for the meeting is "Mastering quality growth." At the meeting, a large number of sessions with round table discussions, brainstorming, and other audience participation activities will be held in parallel. For example, sessions will focus on topics like the "Embracing Disruptive Innovation," or "Energy Security after Fukushima" and "Scientific Solutions to Global Challenges". The World Economic Forum also plans to invite selected scientists (young and more senior) to have speaking roles in various sessions. Again, generate ideas in advance to have a greater impact.

There are also a number of private sessions for the Young Scientists alone. You will be finding out more about what's involved in the days to come but suffice to say that they are primarily working meetings designed to facilitate the generation and exchange of ideas. Plan on attending these and being an active participant.

## **The role of the participants**

As a young scientist selected by IAP your role will be to contribute to the meeting by sharing your knowledge, expertise, ideas and projects with other participants to help drive forward a shift to a more sustainable future. Regardless of your scientific field or background, your creativity and ideas can contribute to the success of the meeting in generating new approaches, policy recommendations, or other tangible outcomes.

## **The role of the Young Scientist mentors**

The young scientist mentors (listed at the end of this note) took part in previous Summer Davos meetings. We aim to guide your preparations, answer any questions, improve the experience for young scientists, and help lead the discussions towards tangible outcomes. You can locate us during the breaks in the Young Scientists Lounge.

## **Hospitality**

Those of you who have not previously visited China are in for a pleasant surprise. The level of hospitality is very high, generally exceeding what you would expect in the West, for example. In Tianjin last year, we were accommodated in first-rate hotels and the food provided was excellent (although sneaking off one evening for a traditional Chinese banquet is recommended). One thing to be aware of: your accommodation costs are covered for the duration of the meeting (5 nights). If you arrive early, or stay on after the meeting ends, you will have to pay for your room.

The conference organisers ensure that there are always English-speaking staff around to help visitors. This help begins at the airport; look for the uniformed staff and desk with “World Economic Forum” designation after baggage claim to direct you to the private shuttle bus to the hotel. Many Chinese speak reasonable English, particularly younger people. However, unsurprisingly the odds of finding someone conversant in English drops off quickly as you move away from areas frequented by visitors. The calculator is the universal tool for showing prices when bargaining in shops or markets, and many restaurants can provide an illustrated menu for non-Mandarin speakers. Don’t be afraid to go off and explore.

## **Dress**

The meeting is more formal than most scientific conferences. Most attendees at last year’s meeting wore either a suit (or equivalent attire for women) or formal national dress. In the evening, the formal banquets will also require smart attire (e.g., suit and tie for men and the equivalent for women).

## **Useful links for more information**

- The World Economic Forum’s website: [www.weforum.org/en/index.htm](http://www.weforum.org/en/index.htm)
- The IAP website: [www.interacademies.net/](http://www.interacademies.net/)
- IAP Young Scientists Conference in 2010 (Tianjin):  
[www.interacademies.net/Activities/Projects/IAPYoungScientistsProgramme/12282.aspx](http://www.interacademies.net/Activities/Projects/IAPYoungScientistsProgramme/12282.aspx)

### *Links to Legacies ...*

- The Tianjin Statement (2008): <http://www.interacademies.net/?id=8632>
- The Global Young Academy (GYA) website: [www.globalyoungacademy.org](http://www.globalyoungacademy.org)
- The Young Scientist Ambassador Programme (2010) : [www.chem.ufl.edu/~miller/YSAP/](http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~miller/YSAP/)

We look forward to meeting you all in Dalian. If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with any of us.

### *Young Scientist Mentors 2011:*

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