



Press Release

15 July 2014

Singapore signs MoU with International Human Frontier Science Program Organization to be member country of the Human Frontier Science Program

1. Officials from the International Human Frontier Science Program Organization (HFSP) and the National Research Foundation, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore, signed a Memorandum of Understanding today for Singapore to become a member country of the Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP).

2. Founded in 1989, the HFSP promotes basic research on biological functions through international cooperation. To-date, it has established itself as a funding organization that pushes the frontiers of modern life sciences. HFSP awardees have clinched 23 Nobel prizes and prestigious awards such as the Louis-Jeantet Prize¹ medals and the Lasker Awards².

3. One of the criteria to be approved as a member country in the HFSP is to demonstrate scientific excellence in life sciences. With the membership, Singapore researchers will be able to compete for funding support under the various HFSP funding programmes. HFSP funding programmes commence at the post-doctoral level and include:

a. **Research Grants** (Young Investigators Grants and Program Grants) which are awarded for ground-breaking collaborations entailing extensive collaboration among teams of scientists working in different countries and in different disciplines;

b. **Postdoctoral Fellowships** (Long-Term and Cross-Disciplinary) which are awarded to scientists who wish to work in foreign laboratories. Priority is given to individuals who are keen to obtain training in a different field of research and;

¹ The Louis-Jeantet Prize for Medicine distinguishes leading-edge researchers who are active in the member countries of the European Council. As one of the best-endowed awards in Europe, the Louis-Jeantet Prize for Medicine fosters scientific excellence.

² The Lasker Awards recognise the contributions of scientists, physicians, and public servants who have made major advances in the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, cure, and prevention of human disease. The awards usually precede future recognition by the Nobel committee.

c. **Career Development Awards** which provides former HFSP Long-Term or Cross-Disciplinary Fellows with support for initiating the fellows' first independent laboratory.

4. Secretary-General, Prof Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker of the HFSP, said: "HFSP warmly welcomes Singapore as its 15th member on the occasion of the Program's 25th anniversary. We are impressed by the scientific capacity and achievements of Singapore in the field of the modern life sciences. The membership of Singapore in HFSP enhances the global presence of our organization and marks the growing scientific strength in the Asia-Pacific region".

5. Prof Low Teck Seng, CEO, NRF said: "Singapore's participation opens the door for our scientists and researchers to be part of a leading international community in life sciences. The programme provides them with more research opportunities, access to international research groups, and more avenues to contribute to ground-breaking research. Through these collaborative efforts and interdisciplinary connections, we look forward to Singapore advancing in the field of life sciences."

Enclosure:

Annex – Factsheet on HFSP

Human Frontier Science Program

The Human Frontier Science Program is an international program of research support implemented by the International Human Frontier Science Program Organization (HFSP) based in Strasbourg, France. Its aims are to promote intercontinental collaboration and training in cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research focused on the life sciences. HFSP receives financial support from the governments or research councils of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, UK, USA, as well as from the European Union.

National Research Foundation, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore

The National Research Foundation (NRF), set up on 1 January 2006, is a department within the Prime Minister's Office. The NRF sets the national direction for research and development (R&D) by developing policies, plans and strategies for research, innovation and enterprise. It also funds strategic initiatives and builds up R&D capabilities by nurturing research talent. The NRF aims to transform Singapore into a vibrant R&D hub that contributes towards a knowledge-intensive, innovative and entrepreneurial economy; and make Singapore a talent magnet for scientific and innovation excellence. For more information, please visit www.research.gov.sg

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Human Frontier Science Program

Facts and Figures

HFSP Mission

HFSP provides support for basic research at the frontiers of the life sciences in the form of research grants for collaboration between laboratories in different countries and fellowships for postdoctoral scientists wishing to extend their expertise in a laboratory abroad. Fellows who are making the decisive transition to independence may apply for a Career Development Award in the home country or another HFSP member country. HFSP awards are granted only on the basis of the highest international standards of scientific excellence and creativity.

Sources of HFSP funding

The participation of Singapore brings the number of HFSP members (Management Supporting Parties or MSPs) to 15. Singapore joins Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Norway, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the European Union in providing funding to the Program. At the Intergovernmental Conference hosted by the European Union in Brussels in 2013, the MSPs approved an indicative budgetary guideline for the period 2014-2016. Singapore provides its contribution according to the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding concluded between HFSP and Singapore.

History

HFSP was proposed by former Prime Minister Nakasone of Japan at the 1987 G7 summit in Venice. Following discussions with the international scientific community, the scope of the program was defined and the Organization was founded in 1989 with the Secretariat in Strasbourg. The first awards were made in 1990. The original MSPs were the countries of the G7, together with the EU. Switzerland joined in 1991. Australia, Republic of Korea, India, New Zealand and Norway have joined since 2004.

HFSP Scientific Programs

A broad range of biological fields is supported by HFSP, from studies of the molecular basis of biological complexity to research into brain functions.

These are:

- Program Grants which support collaboration on frontier projects in the life sciences involving laboratories in different countries with expertise in different fields and disciplines. In 2001 the *Young Investigator Grant* was introduced to

support early career scientists within the first five years of obtaining their first independent position.

- Long-Term Fellowships which support postdoctoral training abroad to enable young scientists to broaden their expertise. In 2005, the Cross-Disciplinary Fellowship Program which was introduced to encourage scientists with a PhD in the natural sciences or engineering to bring their expertise to bear on biological problems;
- Career Development Awards which support former HFSP fellows who are returning to their home country or moving to another HFSP member country in the critical period as they transit to independence;
- Awardees Meetings, which are held each year in a different MSP country, bring together HFSP awardees to report on the results of their research and to promote communication between scientists from different fields.

HFSP Nakasone Award

The HFSP Nakasone Award rewards conceptual breakthroughs at the frontiers of the life sciences. The award recognises the vision of former Prime Minister Nakasone of Japan in the creation of HFSP. The 2014 Nakasone Award was made to Uri Alon of the Weizmann Institute of Science, Israel, for his ground-breaking work in discovering network motifs.

HFSP Awardees

Since 1990, HFSP has made 4005 awards, involving 6,645 scientists throughout the world.

- 966 collaborative Research Grants involving 3,606 scientists. Of these, since 2001, 109 Young Investigator Grants have been awarded to 305 early career scientists;
- 2,846 young postdoctoral scientists of around 70 nationalities have been supported by HFSP Fellowships;
- 193 Career Development Awards have been awarded to HFSP Fellows who have returned to their home countries.

Achievements of HFSP Awardees

The high quality of HFSP awardees is shown by their ongoing success in obtaining national and international honours and awards.

- 23 former HFSP awardees have gone on to win the Nobel Prize;
- Early career HFSP alumni have been successful in obtaining highly competitive grants such as the Starting Grants from the European Research

Council or the Director's Pioneer Award from the US National Institutes of Health.