

Academia Sinica Press Release

Taiwan's Astronomers Included in "North American" ALMA Partnership

Taiwan and the USA signed an agreement recently enabling Taiwanese astronomers to participate in the North American component of the international Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) partnership, alongside American and Canadian astronomers.

The ALMA agreement signed by the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office and the American Institute in Taiwan adds to the earlier pact between the Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics (ASIAA) and the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (NAOJ) in which Taiwan's astronomers joined the Asian component of the ALMA project, thus deepening Taiwan's overall participation in the project.

The pact will be executed by ASIAA and the US National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO). Activities to be undertaken will include joint research projects, development projects, collaboration on construction, support of observatory operations and other forms of cooperation. Access to ALMA observing time will be shared, as will membership on advisory committees.

ALMA, the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array, is the most ambitious ground-based astronomical observatory in history and is currently under construction in Chile's Atacama Desert. At an altitude of 16,500 feet, it promises to revolutionize our understanding of the formation of planets, stars, and galaxies when it begins full scientific operations early in the next decade.

The new agreement provides for approximately US\$20 million in new ALMA construction funding through the National Science Council (NSC), Taiwan's equivalent to the US National Science Foundation (NSF) and Canada's National Research Council (NRC), which have jointly funded North America's existing contribution to the international ALMA project.

"Taiwan is a world-class center for submillimeter-wavelength astronomical research, and we're delighted that the ALMA project and all its future users will benefit from the resources and expertise that Taiwan's deepening participation brings to this great, global endeavor," said Dr. Fred Lo, NRAO's director.

This new agreement increases and diversifies Taiwan's investment in ALMA beyond the levels achieved through its participation in the East Asian component of the ALMA partnership, which is led by NAOJ.

The agreement mirrors previous ones affording Taiwan astronomers enhanced access to NRAO's US-based research facilities.

"ALMA will be one of the greatest ground-based observatories of the coming decade, and we look forward eagerly to working alongside our colleagues at the NRAO, and with the other ALMA partners, to make ALMA even more successful," said Dr. Paul Ho, director of ASIAA.

The ALMA Project is a partnership between the scientific communities of East Asia, Europe and North America with Chile.

ALMA is funded in North America by the U.S. NSF in cooperation with the NRC of Canada and the NSC of Taiwan. ALMA construction and operations are led on behalf of North America by the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, which is operated under cooperative agreement by Associated Universities, Inc.

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Picture Caption:

The antenna on the transporter is the second ALMA-North American antenna to arrive at the ALMA OSF (Operations Support Facilities) site in Chile. Image courtesy of the Joint ALMA Observatory