The General Meeting of the Russian Academy of Sciences

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Address of Academician V. E. Fortov

I suggest that we, first of all, approve the report of our president and the report of the chief learned secretary of the RAS Presidium. They not only vividly outlined what the Academy was able to do over the past year but also very frankly, using specific data, characterized the situation in which domestic basic science finds itself. As we see, this situation is far from being cloudless. Three years ago, the Academy's share in all expenditures on basic science was 34%; now this figure has dropped to 22.5%.

Moreover, the share of expenditures on basic science underwent a hard-to-explain reduction. Three years ago, 47% of all funds spent on science was allocated to basic research; now this figure is only 33.7%. It is obvious that the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, which is reputedly a progressive and dynamic structure that renders substantial support to basic science, is now financed insufficiently. The amount of six billion rubles a year is unacceptable; it must be two-to-three times higher according to the directive documents adopted in due time. The funding shortfall will be a painful blow to those new, interesting, and important programs that the Academy has launched recently. For example, the Presidium's basic research program and the basic research program of our branch were reduced by 20–30%.

In fact, the RAS will have to suspend the program of instrument development, although the instrumentation pool is our weak point, because of which we are unable to compete either with the West or with the East, both of which the country's leaders urge us to do.

Subsequently, many of our proposals, for example, the Concept of Innovative Development and innovative projects that were thoroughly prepared and selected by the RAS, did not receive intelligible feedback from the Russian government. Meanwhile, several projects to which we received no response from our officials were accepted abroad, and we earn good money on them.

You know that the Academy has accumulated a great deal of specific problems in solving which we have to participate proactively. Now we have prepared the first option of the RAS Development Concept, whose creation was assigned to RAS Vice President Academician V.V. Kozlov. The work on this concept is a good pretext for a broad discussion at the Academy on all critical issues of our life. In my opinion, the discussion should involve not only the Academy members and members of the branch bureaus but also rank-and-file associates. We could discuss, for example, bureaucratization and red-tape, research personnel rotation, the situation with instruments, the vertical mobility of youth, pension coverage, housing, interaction with the mass media, the democratization of our work, the democratization of the RAS Charter, and many other issues that worry our associates. I am sure that such a discussion would rally the Academy around the Presidium and the RAS president and would provide him with additional arguments in resolving critical problems of our Academy. I suggest that we include this discussion into the draft resolution, discuss the proposals at the next General Meeting, and outline the ways out of the current situation.