The 18th Asian Chemical Congress (ACC) is held in Taipei, Taiwan, between December 8–12, 2019. The general objective of the 2019 ACC is to promote the advancement and appreciation of current chemistry. Furthermore, it provides a platform of communication and collaboration among professional chemists around the world and, especially, in the Asia Pacific region. Since 1981, the ACC has been a biennial event organized by members of the Federation of Asian Chemical Societies (FACS). This year’s ACC simultaneously chimes the 40th anniversary of FACS.

As early as January of 2018, Dr. Theresa Kueckmann as the Editor of Chemistry-An Asian Journal offered the first international endorsement to the 2019 ACC. On behalf of the Asian Chemical Editorial Society (ACES), she initiated the second joint symposium of ACES and the German Chemical Society (GDCh) with two consecutive sessions during the 2019 ACC. At the symposium, Prof. Martin Banwell will be awarded the 2019 Ryoji Noyori ACES Award for his innovative work in natural product synthesis as well as his international approach to scientific research. Other speakers at the symposium are Prof. Alois Fürstner who holds the GDCh lecture, Prof. Vivian W.-W. Yam, Prof. Xiaogang Liu, Prof. Xing Yi Ling and Prof. Kei Murakami.

ACES is an organization of 12 major chemical societies in the Asia–Pacific region committed to scientific excellence, publishing ethics, and the highest standards in publication. FACS is an official supporting organization for the publication of the three ACES journals Chemistry-An Asian Journal, Asian Journal of Organic Chemistry, and ChemNanoMat. In addition, Chemistry-An Asian Journal is publishing this special issue to showcase the high quality of the 2019 ACC prior to the opening of the Congress. This issue contains contributions from keynote and invited speakers of the 18th ACC, including an Essay by American Chemical Society (ACS) past president Dr. Marinda Wu on the important role of chemical societies in international collaboration, and a Minireview by Prof. Martin Banwell on chemoenzymatic processes in total synthesis.

After securing the GDCh’s cordial participation, the 2019 ACC received the approbation of The Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC). Dr. Sarah Thomas, Senior Programme Manager, and Dr. Paul Lewis, Deputy Chief Executive of RSC, agreed that FACS (represented by its president Professor David Winkler) signs an Memorandum of Understanding with RSC. The RSC will have three consecutive sessions covering the Biomaterials Symposium and theme of “Women’s Retention and Progression in the Chemical Sciences.” Moreover, president of American Chemical Society Dr. Bonnie A. Charpentier offers its continuous support to FACS and presents at alk in the opening ceremony of the 2019 ACC. On behalf of IUPAC, its president Prof. Qi-Feng Zhou also places a high value on the 2019 ACC and attends this
Three Nobel Laureates, Prof. Yuan T. Lee (1986) from Taiwan, Prof. Akira Suzuki (2010) from Japan, and Sir Prof. J. Fraser Stoddart (2016) from Scotland/U.S.A. deliver plenary speeches to audiences coming from more than 50 countries. The audiences experience the highest echelon of scientific knowledge directly from these three top-class scientists. Russian team members led by Prof. Valery N. Charushin (Vice President of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS)) expose solid achievements in fundamental and modern medicinal chemistry. More Russian scholars participating in the 2019 ACC include Prof. Sergey M. Aldoshin (Vice President of RAS (2008–2017)), Prof. Mikhail P. Egorov (Editor-in-Chief of Russian Chemical Bulletin and Russian Chemical Reviews) and Prof. Sergey O. Bachurin (Director of Federal State Budgetary Institution of Science). The leader and staff of BioHub Taiwan, located in the National Biotechnology Research Park, meet with the Russian delegation to share their experience and information on enterprise with the Russian team members. These Taiwanese experts collaborate with the regulatory, finance, pharmaceuticals clinical, R&D and incubation centers to explore investment opportunity in Taiwan and organizations worldwide. BioHub Taiwan makes the strong linkage with the bio–industries needs between Taiwan and Russia. It is bringing together possible collaborators and make new development happen on both sides. Internationally renowned scholars of the western world, including Professors Erik De Clercq, Rolf Hilgenfeld, Koen Augustyns, and Dr. Jacob Plattner, speak about research advancement on drug development and commercialization in various symposia.

During the 2019 ACC, more than 55 highly regarded keynote speakers present their research results to audiences. Constructive and dynamic interactions among peers are seen in respective sessions. Meanwhile, most of the presidents (or their delegates) of the 28 chemical societies associated with FACS attend the Congress. A number of them present keynote speeches in the Presidential Symposium to disclose the main themes of modern development in chemistry and related sciences of their societies. This special symposium is run in three parallel sessions and particularly dedicated to the 40th anniversary of FACS.

The leading groups of participants include those from Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand. Japanese teams organize six symposia for the 2019 ACC; RSC offers three; ACES & GDCh offer two; Hong Kong offers seven; and Taiwan offers 38. Some scientists coming from countries such as Åland Islands, Ecuador, Timor-Leste, and Zimbabwe also actively participate in discussions. Many of them devote their time to the acquisition of knowledge on topics such as global warming and extreme weather, carbon capture and utilization, sustainable chemical science and technology, and advanced nanomaterials.

There are approximately 20 invited speakers delivering Commemorative Lectures in the dedicated session on “Asian Rising Stars”. This session represents a “showcase” to the world of the best Asian young researchers. All presenters in this session are admitted on the basis of a strict invitation. This activity offers an ideal opportunity for the brilliant minds to meet and foster collaborations.

The most unique theme for the 2019 ACC is the new program “Best of the Best Prizes (BBP) ChemCompetition.” The target group is postgraduate and undergraduate students in the chemical sciences. It aims to encourage diligent and ambitious students to engage in the competition and thus distinguish themselves at an early stage of their professional training. The best 40 posters presented in the 2019 ACC are awarded the “The Best Prize.” The 10 finalists among the 40 awardees with the best oral presentation scores are honored during the closing ceremony with “Best of the Best Prize” medals along with USD150 each. Fair distribution of awardees to FACS member societies and non-member countries is assured by the judgment of leading international scholars. Students coming from over 14 different countries have enrolled in this competition, thus underlining the success of this new program.

To encourage scientists from finance-deficient societies to attend this event, the organizing committee members of 2019 ACC started fundraising. Use of awesome strategies followed by a process of seeking and gathering voluntary financial contributions leads to engage individuals and businesses foundations’ contributions. On the other hand, it is the only pity that many invited Chinese scientists who have scientific heavy-weight cannot make their trips to Taiwan possible this time.

Finally, the 40th anniversary of FACS is grandly celebrated in the gala dinner of the 2019 ACC. Many former FACS presidents gather and join this exciting moment. Participants learn the history of FACS and its efforts on international communication and collaboration on scientific topics within Asia, Europe, America, and Africa. It becomes the common goal of all attendees for performing excellent chemistry to make life wonderful.