

Welcome from Commission 55

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On behalf of Dennis Crabtree and myself from IAU Commission 55 I would like to welcome you all to what I know will be a splendid, enjoyable and rewarding conference. This will be a very brief introduction so we can get on with the real topic of discussion, preparations for IYA2009.

Commission 55 has been very active in supporting IYA2009: Dennis, Lars and I are members of the IAU Executive Working Group overseeing the international events and it is clear that this activity has diverted us from the C55 larger goals. However, let me take this opportunity to remind you about the Washington Charter¹; having as many organisations as possible sign up to and then follow the themes of the Washington Charter is one of our key tasks. Let us set a key goal of enlarging the signatories by 50% by the end of the meeting — please checkout the web and then contact me if you intend taking this to one of your organisations so I can follow up with you.

Of course organising this meeting has been one of the key tasks of C55 since CAP2007, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our hosts and the Local Organising Committee, especially Manolis. Key members of C55 have been far from inactive, however, and at this meeting we will see the launch of the new Communicating Astronomy with the Public journal, spearheaded by Pedro Russo. This promises an exciting future and a refereed medium for you to publish your work and ideas. Excellent work has also been going on behind the scenes on the Astronomy Metadata Visualization Standards project, now part of the Virtual Astronomy Multimedia Project (VAMP) and you will see examples of this at this meeting.

So, without further ado, let us move on to hear from the President of the International Astronomical Union, Catherine Cesarsky, about IYA2009.

¹ http://www.communicatingastronomy.org/washington_charter