

Welcome to the International Year of Astronomy 2009

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Abstract

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 will be a global celebration of astronomy and its contributions to society and culture, highlighting the on-going explosion of knowledge about the Universe.

Introduction

Following a suggestion from Franco Pacini, IAU President from 2000 to 2003, the International Year of Astronomy (IYA2009) was launched by an IAU resolution at the end of the General Assembly in Sydney, just as Franco was passing the presidency to Ron Ekers. The date was chosen to commemorate 400 years since the first use of a telescope by Galileo. Following a presentation by the Italian delegation, backed by several other delegations from all over the world, IYA2009 was endorsed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which is now a coordinator with IAU. At this meeting, Minella Alarcon will present the UNESCO vision for IYA2009. The Italian delegation at the United Nations (UN) is about to submit a resolution, in conjunction with thirty other countries, for the UN to declare 2009 the International Year of Astronomy. The decision will be taken by the UN General Assembly early in December 2007.

Goals and implementation

IYA2009 will be a global celebration of astronomy, with the motto: "The Universe: Yours to Discover", and will be in accord with the UN millennium development goals.

It will encompass activities all over the world, aimed at people of all ages, but particularly young people from all continents and all walks of life. It will mobilise professional astronomers and physicists, historians, science writers, journalists, planetariums, science museums, amateur astronomers and school teachers.

In 2009 we would like everybody on Earth to think, at least once, about the wonders of the sky; to share the human wish to reach to the stars and to comprehend them; to feel part of the Universe; to give as many people as possible the chance to gaze through a telescope, be it only a cheap Galileoscope aimed at the Moon; and hear or read about astronomy's contribution to culture, the history of astronomy, its recent successes and its future prospects.

CAP2007

At this meeting, Pedro Russo (IYA2009 coordinator) and Lars Lindberg Christensen (IAU Press Officer) will introduce the main planned activities, called the Cornerstones, and their coordination, while the various SPoCs (Single Points of Contact) will detail the activities in preparation in their countries. A glance at the titles of presentations in the programme shows that most of them are relevant to many of the IYA2009 themes, including humanising astronomy, bringing the Universe back to Earth, inspiring a community and visualising the invisible. This meeting is also an opportunity for all of us to comment on the existing plans, and also to express new ideas.

We, the IYA2009 Working Group, hope that after this meeting the national activities will rapidly take shape and that our global organisation will be set on a stronger basis:

MAKE IT HAPPEN!