

PRESS PACK

SENA INTERNAZZJONALI TAL-ASTRONOMIJA 2009
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ASTRONOMY 2009
Launch of the Malta programme

Robert Samut Hall, Floriana
Tuesday 27th January 2009 at 12.00 – 13.00

To be inaugurated by the Minister for Education,
Culture, Youth and Sport the Hon Dolores Cristina.

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Malta Launch of the International Year of Astronomy 2009 Programme

12.00-12.15 Introduction

Dr Gordon Caruana Dingli - IYA2009 Malta Node

Mr Tony Tanti - President Astronomical Society of Malta

Mr Leonard Ellul Mercer Clip on astronomy/moon (5 min)

12.15-12.25 Astronomy related to science education and activities to be held in schools during this year

Mr Gaetano Bugeja & Mr Christopher Schembri

12.25-12.35 Presentation by Mr S Medvedev

12.35-12.45 Unesco representative

12.45-12.55 Opening of IYA by the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports the Hon Dolores Cristina

12.55-13.00 Opening of Exhibition of paintings by Russian children

Mr Medvedev/Russian Ambassador.

The International Year of Astronomy

2009 has been declared International Year of Astronomy by the General Assembly of the UN (United Nations Organization).

The Opening ceremony of the International Year of Astronomy took place in Paris, January 15-16, 2009, under the aegis of the United Nations, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) and the IAU (International Astronomical Union).

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 is a global effort initiated by the International Astronomical Union and UNESCO to help the citizens of the world rediscover their place in the Universe through the day- and night-time sky, and thereby engage a personal sense of wonder and discovery.

Vision

Everyone should realise the impact of astronomy and other fundamental sciences on our daily lives, and understand how scientific knowledge can contribute to a more equitable and peaceful society. IYA2009 activities will take place locally, nationally, regionally and internationally. National Nodes have been formed in each country to prepare activities for 2009. These nodes will establish collaborations between professional and amateur astronomers, science centres and science communicators to prepare activities for 2009. Already now, 136 countries are involved and well over 140 are expected to participate eventually.

To help coordinate this huge global programme and to provide an important resource for the participating countries, the IAU has established a central Secretariat and an IYA2009 website (www.astronomy2009.org) as the principal IYA2009 resource for public, professionals and media alike.

Malta Committee

Malta will join countries all over the world to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the telescope and the 40th anniversary of the first moon landing. This is a unique opportunity for Maltese astronomers to unite with astronomers around the world.

We will also take astronomy to the public and involve them in the marvels of the universe.

Co-operating with the Education Department we will also involve schoolchildren, hoping to interest them in astronomy and science and perhaps encourage them to take up a career in science which is so important for our country.

The United Nations 62nd General Assembly IYA2009 Resolution text (62/200):

International Year of Astronomy, 2009

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 61/185 of 20 December 2006 on the proclamation of international years,

Aware that astronomy is one of the oldest basic sciences and that it has contributed and still contributes fundamentally to the evolution of other science and applications in a wide range of fields,

Recognizing that astronomical observations have profound implications for the development of science, philosophy, culture and the general conception of the universe, Noting that, although there is a general interest in astronomy, it is often difficult for the general public to gain access to information and knowledge on the subject,

Conscious that each society has developed legends, myths and traditions concerning the sky, the planets and the stars which form part of its cultural heritage,

Welcoming resolution 33 C/25 adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 19 October 2005,¹ to express its support for the declaration of 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy, with a view

to highlighting the importance of astronomical sciences and their contribution to knowledge and development,
Noting that the International Astronomical Union has been supporting the initiative since 2003 and that it will act to grant the project the widest impact,
Convinced that the Year could play a crucial role, inter alia, in raising public awareness of the importance of astronomy and basic sciences for sustainable development, promoting access to the universal knowledge of fundamental science through the excitement generated by the subject of astronomy, supporting formal and informal science education in schools as well as through science centres and museums and other relevant means, stimulating a long-term increase in student enrolment in the fields of science and technology, and supporting scientific literacy,

1. Decides to declare 2009 the International Year of Astronomy;
2. Designates the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as the lead agency and focal point for the Year, and invites it to organize, in this capacity, activities to be realized during the Year, in collaboration with other relevant entities of the United Nations system, the International Astronomical Union, the European Southern Observatory and astronomical societies and groups throughout the world, and, in this regard, notes that the activities of the Year will be funded from voluntary contributions, including from the private sector;
3. Encourages all Member States, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the Year to promote actions at all levels aimed at increasing awareness among the public of the importance of astronomical sciences and promoting widespread access to new knowledge and experiences of astronomical observation.

1 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Records of the General Conference, 33rd session, Paris, 3-21 October 2005 (Paris, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), vol. 1, Resolutions, chap. V.