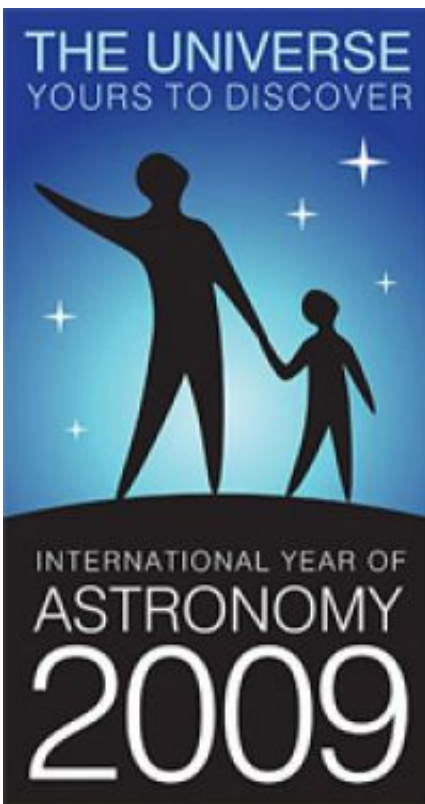


The UN declares 2009 the International Year of Astronomy

December 20 2007



This is the official logo for the International Year of Astronomy. Credit: IAU

Early this morning, the United Nations 62nd General Assembly proclaimed 2009 the International Year of Astronomy. The Resolution was submitted by Italy, Galileo Galilei's home country. The International Year of Astronomy 2009 is an initiative of the International Astronomical Union and UNESCO.

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA2009) celebrates the first astronomical use of the telescope by Galileo — a momentous event that initiated 400 years of astronomical discoveries and triggered a scientific revolution which profoundly affected our worldview.

Now telescopes on the ground and in space explore the Universe, 24 hours a day, across all wavelengths of light. The President of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) Catherine Cesarsky says: “The International Year of Astronomy 2009 gives all nations a chance to participate in this ongoing exciting scientific and technological revolution.”

The IYA2009 will highlight global cooperation for peaceful purposes – the search for our cosmic origin and our common heritage which connect all citizens of planet Earth. For several millennia, astronomers have worked together across all boundaries including geographic, gender, age, culture and race, in line with the principles of the UN Charter. In that sense, astronomy is a classic example of how science can contribute towards furthering international cooperation.

At the IAU General Assembly on 23 July 2003 in Sydney (Australia), the IAU unanimously approved a resolution in favour of the proclamation of 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy. Based on Italy’s initiative, UNESCO’s General Conference at its 33rd session recommended that the UN General Assembly adopt a resolution to declare 2009 the International Year of Astronomy. On 20 December 2007 the International Year of Astronomy 2009 was proclaimed by the United Nations 62nd General Assembly. The UN has designated the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the lead agency for the IYA2009. The IAU will function as the facilitating body for IYA2009.

The IYA2009 is, first and foremost, an activity for the citizens of planet

Earth. It aims to convey the excitement of personal discovery, the pleasure of sharing fundamental knowledge about the Universe and our place in it, and the merits of the scientific method. Astronomy is an invaluable source of inspiration for humankind throughout all nations. So far 99 nations and 14 organisations have signed up to participate in the IYA2009 – an unprecedented network of committed communicators and educators in astronomy.

Source: International Astronomical Union

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