

The banner features a silhouette of an adult and a child on the left, looking at a starry sky. The text 'INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ASTRONOMY 2009' is prominently displayed in the center. On the right, there are logos for the IAU and the Canadian National Node, along with a Canadian flag. The tagline 'THE UNIVERSE : YOURS TO DISCOVER' is at the bottom.

# INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ASTRONOMY 2009

THE UNIVERSE : YOURS TO DISCOVER



 CANADA  
NATIONAL NODE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **UN declares 2009 “International Year of Astronomy”**

Today the United Nations (UN) 62<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly proclaimed 2009 the “International Year of Astronomy”. The International Year of Astronomy 2009 is an initiative by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The International Year of Astronomy (IYA2009) will be a global celebration of astronomy and its contributions to society and culture, highlighted by the 400th anniversary of the first use of an astronomical telescope by Galileo Galilei. The aim of IYA2009 is to stimulate worldwide interest, especially among young people, in astronomy and science. IYA2009 events and activities will take place at the global, regional, and local levels, to promote a greater appreciation of the inspirational aspects of astronomy that embody an invaluable shared resource for all nations. The UN has designated UNESCO as the lead agency for the IYA2009, while the IAU will function as the implementing body. The full text of the UN resolution is available on the IYA Canadian website at <http://www.astronomy2009.ca>.

In Canada, IYA2009 plans are already underway. A collaboration of amateur and professional astronomers has formed a national Coordinating Committee and is organizing a year-long slate of programs to bring astronomy to Canadians.

Committee chair Dr. Jim Hesser of the National Research Council Canada explains: *“In Canada we’ve forged a strong partnership between amateur and professional astronomers in the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, the Fédération des Astronomes Amateurs du Québec, and the Canadian Astronomical Society. Our goal is to help Canadians reconnect with the wonders of the sky during IYA by offering an engaging astronomy experience to Canadians, with special efforts towards young people and legacies lasting beyond 2009. We are proud that Canada realises the importance of science as one of the pillars of a modern society and is a collaborator of the IYA2009.”*

The IYA2009 is a global collaboration for a peaceful purpose – the search for our cosmic origin, a common heritage that connects every citizen of planet Earth. The science of astronomy represents millennia of collaborations across all boundaries: geographic, gender, age, culture and race, providing a full consistency to the UN Charter principles. In that sense, astronomy is a classic example of how science can contribute towards a deepening international cooperation and collaboration.

At the IAU General Assembly 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 the initiative of Italy, the General Conference of UNESCO at its 33<sup>rd</sup> 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 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. The inspirational aspects of astronomy represent an invaluable resource for humankind and for all nations. So far an impressive 99 nations and 14 organisations have signed up to participate in the IYA2009 – an unprecedented network of engaged astronomy communicators and educators.

For more information about the International Year of Astronomy 2009 please visit the IAU website at <http://www.astronomy2009.org/> or the Canadian site at <http://www.astronomy2009.ca>

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**Links:**

The web site for the International Year of Astronomy 2009 National Node in Canada:  
<http://www.astronomy2009.ca> or <http://www.astronomie2009.ca>

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 web site:  
<http://www.astronomy2009.org/>

The International Astronomical Union:  
<http://www.iau.org/>

**Notes for editors**

The vision of the IYA2009 is 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. All humans should realize the impact of astronomy and basic sciences on our daily lives, and understand better how scientific knowledge can contribute to a more equitable and peaceful society.

The aim of the IYA2009 is to stimulate worldwide interest, especially among young people, in astronomy and science under the central theme "The Universe, Yours to Discover". IYA2009 events and activities will promote a greater appreciation of the inspirational aspects of astronomy that embody an invaluable shared resource for all nations.

The IAU is the international astronomical organisation that brings together almost 10,000 distinguished astronomers from all nations of the world. Its mission is to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects through international cooperation. The IAU also serves as the internationally recognized authority for assigning designations to celestial bodies and surface features on them. Founded in 1919, the IAU is the world's largest professional body for astronomers.