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## **The International Year of Astronomy 2009 Opening Ceremony: Save the Date**

**21 November 2008, Paris:** With just six weeks to go before 2009, the International Year of Astronomy project is getting ready for its grand Opening Ceremony. This promises to be a spectacular event, held at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Headquarters in Paris, 15 and 16 January 2009. Hundreds of attendees are expected, including members of royal families, government ministers, Nobel Prize winners and other eminent scientists. The press is invited to attend and to “save the date” in the calendar.

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA2009) has been launched by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) under the theme “The Universe, yours to discover”. IYA2009 marks the 400th anniversary of Galileo Galilei’s first astronomical observation through a telescope in 1609, an event that changed astronomy forever. IYA2009 will be a global celebration of astronomy and its contribution to society and culture, with strong emphasis on education, public participation, and the involvement of young people, and with events at national, regional, and global levels. Many thousands of individuals in over 130 countries around the world are already involved, forming the world’s largest ever astronomy network. IYA2009 will portray astronomy as a peaceful global scientific endeavour that unites astronomers in an international, multicultural family of scientists, working together to find answers to some of the most fundamental questions that humankind has ever asked.

A strong media presence is anticipated at the Opening Ceremony, drawn by the high profile events and speakers. In addition, there will be exhibits by well-known science institutions who support IYA2009.

A press conference will be held on the 15 January 2009, 12:30 p.m., at the UNESCO Headquarters. This press conference will address some of the most vibrant subjects of modern astronomy research and the International Year of Astronomy 2009 highlights.

The Opening Ceremony is set to launch IYA2009 on its journey. Its mission: to help the citizens of the world rediscover their place within the Universe.

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### **Links**

- Opening Ceremony website: <http://www.astronomy2009.org/opening>
- IYA2009 website: <http://www.astronomy2009.org/>

### **Media accreditation**

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