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## **The International Year of Astronomy 2009 Opening Ceremony: Invitation to the Media**

**09 January 2009, Paris: The grand Opening Ceremony of the International Year of Astronomy 2009 is just around the corner. It will be held at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Headquarters in Paris, 15 and 16 January 2009, and promises to be a spectacular event. Hundreds of attendees are expected, including members of royal families, ministers, Nobel Prize winners, scientists from around the globe, and young astronomy undergraduate students from more than 100 countries. The media are invited to attend, and see firsthand how 2009 will make the Universe yours to discover. A webcast feed will be available.**

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA2009) is 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 135 countries are already involved, forming the world's largest ever astronomy network. IYA2009 represents 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.

Held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris (Room I), the official Opening Ceremony is the formal beginning of IYA2009: a year full of astronomy themed initiatives and activities. It is a golden opportunity to get an overview of the the 11 Cornerstone Projects and the most important events occurring during the Year. IYA2009 stakeholders will be present, including heads of national committees and chairs of global and special projects. A live web cast will be available from 15 January at <http://www.astronomy2009.org/webcast>

A strong media presence is anticipated at the Opening Ceremony, and representatives of the press are encouraged to attend. The Ceremony will feature high profile events, speakers, and, of course, the excitement of astronomy itself. UNESCO Director General, Koïchiro Matsuura will present the opening address, followed by talks by ministers of research from several countries, an IYA2009 overview from the International Astronomical Union President Catherine Cesarsky, talks by Nobel Laureates Bob Wilson and Baruch Blumberg, a presentation by Lord Martin Rees, live video conferences with ESO's Very Large Telescope on Paranal, the South Pole Station and the Very Long Baseline Interferometry array, a film on Gustav Holst, *The Planets*, from the Adler Planetarium's José Francisco Salgado. In addition, exhibits from well-known science institutions who support IYA2009 will be on display.

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

The Opening Ceremony is set to launch IYA2009 on its journey, and the media will have a front-row seat.

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### **Links**

- Opening Ceremony website: <http://www.astronomy2009.org/opening>
- Live web cast: <http://www.astronomy2009.org/webcast> (from 15 January)
- IYA2009 website: <http://www.astronomy2009.org>

### **Media accreditation**

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