



European Physical Society
Press Release 20 December 2013
For Immediate Release



INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF LIGHT

THE UNITED NATIONS PROCLAIMS AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LIGHT IN 2015

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly 68th Session has today during its 71st Plenary Meeting proclaimed 2015 as the **International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies (IYL 2015)**. In proclaiming an International Year focusing on the topic of light science and its applications, the United Nations has recognized the importance of raising global awareness of how light-based technologies promote sustainable development and provide solutions to global challenges in energy, education, agriculture and health. Indeed, the resolution was adopted as part of a more general Agenda item on Science and technology for development. This International Year will bring together many different stakeholders including UNESCO, scientific societies and unions, educational and research institutions, technology platforms, non-profit organizations and private sector partners to promote and celebrate the significance of light and its applications during 2015.

Light plays a vital role in our daily lives and is an imperative cross-cutting discipline of science in the 21st century. It has revolutionized medicine, opened up international communication via the Internet, and continues to be central to linking cultural, economic and political aspects of the global society. For centuries light has transcended all boundaries, including geographic, gender, age and culture, and is a tremendous subject to motivate education. It is critical that the brightest young minds continue to be attracted to optics and photonics in order to ensure the next generation of engineers and innovators in this field.

IYL 2015 will promote improved public and political understanding of the central role of light in the modern world while also celebrating a number of important significant anniversaries that take place in 2015 - from the first studies of optics 1000 years ago during the Islamic Golden Age to discoveries in internet optical fiber technology in 1965. As the Chairman of the IYL 2015 Steering Committee John Dudley explains: "An International Year of Light is a tremendous opportunity to ensure that policymakers are made aware of the problem-solving potential of light technology. Photonics provides cost-effective solutions to challenges in so many different areas: energy, sustainable development, climate change, health, communications and agriculture. For example, innovative lighting solutions reduce energy consumption and environmental impact, while minimizing light pollution so that we can all appreciate the beauty of the Universe in a dark sky. IYL2015 is a unique opportunity to raise global awareness of advances in this field."

The IYL 2015 resolution was submitted to the United Nations Second Committee on 6th November 2013 by the nation of Mexico, with delegates from both Mexico and New Zealand speaking in support. As Ana María Cetto from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) says: "Light matters to all of us. It is thanks to light that we know our place in the Universe, and that there is life on Earth. The IYL will create a forum for scientists, engineers, artists, poets and all others inspired by light to interact both with each other and with the public so as to learn more about the nature of light, its many applications, and its role in history and culture." The resolution was adopted with co-sponsorship from 35 countries: Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mauritius, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Palau, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and United States of America. This impressive list of co-sponsors reflects the truly international and inclusive nature of the theme of an International Year of Light.

The IYL 2015 is endorsed by a number of international Scientific Unions and the International Council for Science (ICSU). The IYL 2015 will be administered by an International Steering Committee in collaboration with the UNESCO International Basic Sciences Programme and a Secretariat at The Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) which is a UNESCO Category 1 Institute. The Founding Scientific Sponsors of IYL2015 are: the European Physical Society (EPS), international society for optics and photonics (SPIE), The Optical Society (OSA), the IEEE Photonics Society (IPS), the American Physical Society (APS) and the lightsources.org international network. National and regional committees and contact points currently being established will ensure all nations of the world can participate. For more information, and to be placed on a mailing list for updates, please contact light@eps.org Downloads are available from www.eps.org/light2015.



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Further Information

The International Year of Light 2015 (IYL 2015) partnership was formed in 2010 and consists of a wide range of stakeholders including learned societies, educational institutions, networks, technology platforms and other non-profit organizations. The partners include professionals and volunteers in areas ranging from technology and engineering to art and culture, and come from Africa, Europe, the Americas, Eurasia, Asia and Australasia. Young people are represented prominently through the many international student chapters of international learned societies. Support during the construction phase of the project came from many partners, including the African Physical Society, the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, the International Commission for Optics, the International Union for Pure and Applied Physics, the Russian Academy of Sciences, the New Zealand Institute of Physics and the Royal Society of New Zealand, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and many other groups and individuals. A number of preparatory actions are already planned during 2014, including coordinated outreach by the European Consortium for Outreach in Photonics via the GoPhoton! project, and many other local, regional and international events to raise awareness and to plan exciting activities throughout 2015.

The major scientific anniversaries that will be celebrated during 2015 are: the works on optics by Ibn Al-Haytham in 1015; the notion of light as a wave proposed by Fresnel in 1815; the electromagnetic theory of light propagation proposed by Maxwell in 1865; Einstein's theory of the photoelectric effect in 1905 and of the embedding of light in cosmology through general relativity in 1915; the discovery of the cosmic microwave background by Penzias and Wilson, and Charles Kao's achievements concerning the transmission of light in fibres for optical communication, in 1965.

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