



DPI/NGO Relations invites you to a

**Briefing**

***"The Sky Above, the Earth Below"***

*Helping to understand how scientific knowledge can contribute to a more peaceful society*

**Thursday, 5 November 2009**

**10:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in**

Simon Wiesenthal Center  
226 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, Suite 1600

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**Background Information**

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 is a global initiative of the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization [UNESCO] and the International Astronomical Union (IAU) endorsed by the UN General Assembly to help ordinary citizens around the world rediscover their place in the universe through the day and night time sky, and in so doing engage in "personal sense of wonder and discovery." The theme for the Year, which also commemorates the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Galileo's use of a telescope to study the skies, is "The Universe, Yours to Discover." The IYA2009 is expected to highlight global cooperation for peaceful purposes. 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 this sense, astronomy is a classic example of how science can contribute towards international cooperation.

Science plays a crucial part in protecting and conserving the planet today and scientific research has led to remarkable innovations that have benefited humankind. Life expectancy has increased, and cures have been discovered for many diseases. In many parts of the world, agricultural output has risen significantly to meet growing population needs, and technological developments have created the opportunity to free humankind from strenuous manual labour. However, scientific progress has also led to environmental degradation and technological disasters such as the manufacturing of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Scientists today face a greater demand to use their knowledge and understanding of science in a responsible manner to address human needs and aspirations. Each of us should be aware of the impact of astronomy and basic sciences on our daily lives, and better understand how scientific knowledge can contribute to a more equitable and peaceful society. Today's Briefing is our first step to ensuring that we all better familiarize ourselves with our universe-the Sky above and the Earth below and our place in it.

Briefings

*We have recently secured the Simon Wiesenthal Center located at 226 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street as a one of the alternative spaces which we will use for our Briefings. We expect to rotate this with whatever other space we can obtain from UN Conference Services. However since the venue is smaller than our previous venue we will need to implement a number of new measures to ensure that we stay within our agreement with the Wiesenthal Center. We therefore ask that you please take note of the following:*

*Since the Simon Wiesenthal Center only seats 80 people, we will only be able to seat NGO's on a first- come first- served basis. Each NGO will be allowed to make ONE reservation by e-mail at [dpingo@un.org](mailto:dpingo@un.org), up to one week before the Briefing but not less than two days prior to the Briefing. The name of the NGO will then be placed on a list, and those on the list will be able to access the Simon Wiesenthal Center with their annual UN Grounds Pass. We will not be able to accommodate guests on those occasions.*

**Please Note that this Briefing will Begin promptly at 10:00 a.m. We ask that all participants be seated by 9:45 a.m.**

**Moderator:** Maria-Luisa Chavez; Chief NGO Relations Cluster

**Panel Speakers**

**Dr. Robert Williams**, President of the International Astronomical Union

**Dr. Antonella Nota**, Deputy Head of the Science Division of the European Space Agency

*Other speakers are in the process of being confirmed and we will re-issue the NGO Invitation once they are finalized.*

**The Panel discussion will be followed by a Question and Answer period.**

Venue for the Briefings will be posted as soon as the information is available. United Nations-produced videos relevant to the Briefing theme are sometimes screened during the Briefing. For Briefing information please call the DPI/NGO Information Line at +1-212-963-7709 or +1-917-367-9380, or e-mail [section1d@un.org](mailto:section1d@un.org). For information pertaining to UN passes, please call +1-212-963-7233. To receive the Briefing information electronically and to be added to our e-mailing list, please e-mail [dpingo@un.org](mailto:dpingo@un.org). You can also visit the DPI/NGO Section website at [www.un.org/dpi/ngosection](http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection), where an archived web cast of the briefings may also be available.