

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ASTRONOMY 2009: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR NETWORKING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR ASTRONOMY AND SPACE SCIENCE IN AFRICA

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The relationship between astronomy and space science is obvious, especially in the eyes of the greater public. In Africa, the stars have always been a part of people's everyday lives, be it in the form of folklore, superstition or even agricultural indicators. Modern astronomy and space science, however, has not been very widespread, with only a few African countries having sufficient facilities or academics to support a modern research community. The International Year of Astronomy serves not only as an opportunity to boost these research communities, but also to celebrate a rich history and culture that has existed for thousands of years. It is an opportunity not just to promote astronomy and space science, but also to spark curiosity and spur a culture of learning, thus building the much needed capacity for future research. This presentation will take the form of a call for African countries to come together for this global event and various ideas for collaboration will be discussed. In the build-up period towards 2009, we also see the preparations for the International Year of Astronomy aligning with inter-sessional activities of the African Leadership Conference (the next of which is scheduled for 2009).