



Permanent Mission of
the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
to the UN



ECOSOC Youth Forum Side Event Concept Note “International Year of Light and Ibn Al-Haytham: Inspiring Youth to Take Action towards the 2030 Agenda for a Better Future”

“As we strive to end poverty and promote shared prosperity, light technologies can offer practical solutions to global challenges” Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General, United Nations

“A ground-breaking scientist from a thousand years ago, the life and work of Ibn Al-Haytham have never been as relevant as they are today. In this International Year of Light, let’s draw on his example and shine new light on cooperation for sustainability!” Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

Background

The International Year of Light and Light-Based Technologies (IYL 2015) is a global initiative adopted by the United Nations (A/RES/68/221) to raise awareness of how optical technologies promote sustainable development and provide solutions to worldwide challenges in energy, education, agriculture, communications and health. With UNESCO as lead agency, IYL 2015 programs promote improved public and political understanding of the central role of light in the modern world while also celebrating noteworthy anniversaries in 2015—from the first studies of optics 1,000 years ago to discoveries in optical communications that power the Internet today.

The year 2015 marks 1,000 years on the ground-breaking work of Ibn al-Haytham on optics *Book of Optics* (Kitab al-Manazir). This pioneering scientific thinker who made important contributions to the understanding of vision, optics and light has been widely celebrated during 2015. Ibn al-Haytham’s methodology of investigation, in particular using experiment to verify theory, shows certain similarities to what later became known as the modern scientific method. Today, many consider him a pivotal figure in the history of optics and the “Father of modern Optics”.

1001 Inventions, a British not-for-profit educational organisation, is a Founding Partner of the International Year of Light. 1001 Inventions creates international educational campaigns aiming to raise awareness of the contributions to science, technology and culture from the Golden Age of Muslim Civilisation. Over the last five years, 1001 Inventions has engaged with over 200 million people across the globe. The educational campaign “*1001 Inventions and the World of Ibn Al-Haytham*” celebrated the legacy of the remarkable scientist using experiential learning to incite inquisitiveness and to encourage young people to study STEM. Through interactive exhibits, hands-on workshops, digital content, short films and educational resources, the campaign helped link the science of the past to contemporary issues, demonstrating how light and light technologies offer solutions to many global challenges.

Event Abstract

The UN proclaimed International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies (IYL2015) will be brought to an official close with a ceremony to be held in Mexico from 4 to 6 February. Ahead of such official closing, this side event aims to bring IYL2015 to the United Nations HQ where the resolution was adopted and the year was proclaimed. This side event aims to shed light on IYL2015 as a highly successful global initiative with thousands of events reaching millions of people, of all ages and all backgrounds.

The side event is a unique opportunity for young people attending the Youth Forum, delegations from member states, representatives from Permanent Missions to the UN and others to learn about the central role of light and light-based technologies in promoting sustainable development and providing solutions to global challenges in energy, education, agriculture, communications and health.

Talks by prominent speakers will shed light on Ibn al-Haytham's seminal contributions to the understanding of vision, optics and light. The short educational film to be screened "1001 Inventions and the World of Ibn Al-Haytham" aims to inspire youth to rise up to the challenges of the 21st century. The story of Ibn al-Haytham, who lived during the golden era of Muslim civilisation which stretched from Spain to China, offers a unique opportunity to highlight the importance of intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and mutual understanding.

Objectives

- ✓ Raise awareness on the importance of science, technology and innovation as an enabler for finding solutions to 21st century challenges.
- ✓ Highlight the importance of light and light-based technologies in helping realize the SDGs and provide solutions to global challenges.
- ✓ Learn about Ibn al-Haytham's inspirational story and his seminal work in optics.
- ✓ Showcase a model for an educational campaign that engaged millions of young people around the world through the use of innovative communications strategies including films and music.
- ✓ Raise awareness of the importance of social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding through celebrating shared creative, scientific and cultural achievements.
- ✓ Inspire young people to be inquisitive and curious and to take actions towards implementing the 2030 Development Goals.

Date, Time and Venue

Date: 2nd February 2016

Time: 1:15-2:45pm

Venue: Conference Room 4 – UN HQ

Format

A 90-minutes session including opening remarks, talks by eminent speakers followed by screening of a short film and an open discussion.

Draft Agenda

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| 1:15-1:45 | Opening Remarks | H.E. Ambassador Abdallah Y. Al-Mouallimi
Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the UN
H.E. Ambassador Juan Sandoval Mendiolea (TBC)
Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the UN
Ms. Marie-Paule Roudil
Director of UNESCO Office in New York
Representative (TBC)
Office of the UN Special Envoy for Global Education
Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi (TBC)
United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy or Youth |
| 1:45-2:00 | Light and Light-Based technologies: Practical Solutions to Global Challenges | Ms. Elizabeth A. Rogan
Chief Executive Officer, The Optical Society-OSA |
| 2:00-2:15 | 1001 Inventions and the World of Ibn Al-Haytham: Engaging Youth Globally | Mr. Ahmed Salim
Managing Director, 1001 Inventions |
| 2:15-2:45 | Screening short film “1001 Inventions and the World of Ibn Al-Haytham”
Final appearance of legendary actor Omar Sharif | |

Open Discussion

Organisers:

Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations in partnership with 1001 Inventions, UNESCO and IYL2015.

Contact

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Additional Information:

International Year of Light and Light-Based Technologies: www.light2015.org
1001 Inventions: www.1001inventions.com
World of Ibn Al-Haytham: www.ibnalhaytham.com