IAU 2006 General Assembly: Result of the IAU Resolution votes (Forwarded)

Source: http://sci.tech−archive.net/Archive/sci.astro/2006−08/msg00251.html

- *From*: Andrew Yee <ayee@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
- *Date*: Thu, 24 Aug 2006 15:04:12 GMT

International Astronomical Union
Paris, France

24 August 2006

IAU 2006 General Assembly: Result of the IAU Resolution votes

Prague, Czech Republic −− The first half of the Closing Ceremony of the 2006 International Astronomical Union (IAU) General Assembly has just concluded. The results of the Resolution votes are outlined here.

It is official: The 26th General Assembly for the International Astronomical Union was an astounding success! More than 2500 astronomers participated in six Symposia, 17 Joint Discussions, seven Special Sessions and four Special Sessions. New science results were vigorously discussed, new international collaborations were initiated, plans for future facilities put forward and much more.

In addition to all the exciting astronomy discussed at the General Assembly, six IAU Resolutions were also passed at the Closing Ceremony of the General Assembly:

1. Resolution 1 for GA−XXVI: "Precession Theory and Definition of the Ecliptic"
2. Resolution 2 for GA−XXVI: "Supplement to the IAU 2000 Resolutions on reference systems"
3. Resolution 3 for GA−XXVI: "Re−definition of Barycentric Dynamical Time, TDB"
4. Resolution 4 for GA−XXVI: "Endorsement of the Washington Charter for Communicating Astronomy with the Public"
5. Resolution 5A: "Definition of 'planet' "
6. Resolution 6A: "Definition of Pluto−class objects"

The IAU members gathered at the 2006 General Assembly agreed that a "planet" is defined as a celestial body that (a) is in orbit around the Sun, (b) has sufficient mass for its self−gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape, and (c) has cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit.

This means that the Solar System consists of eight "planets" Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. A new distinct class of objects called "dwarf planets" was also decided. It was agreed that "planets" and "dwarf planets" are two distinct classes of objects. The first members of the "dwarf planet" category are Ceres, Pluto and 2003 UB313 (temporary name). More "dwarf planets" are expected to be announced by the IAU in the coming months and years. Currently a dozen candidate "dwarf planets" are listed on IAU's "dwarf planet" watchlist, which keeps changing as new objects are found and the physics of the existing candidates becomes better known.

The "dwarf planet" Pluto is recognised as an important proto−type of a new class of trans−Neptunian objects. The IAU will set up a process to name these objects.

Below are the planet definition Resolutions that were passed.

Notes for editors:

A press conference about the Closing Ceremony of the General Assembly, including the results of the planet−definition vote, will be held at 18:00 [1600 UTC], in Meeting Room 3.3 of the Prague Congress Center. (It will NOT be possible for journalists to ring in to this conference: they must be there in person.)

The panel for the press conference will be:

* Ron Ekers (outgoing IAU President)
* Catherine Cesarsky (incoming IAU President, Member of the Planet Definition Committee)
* Jan Palous (Chair of the National Organising Committee)
* Richard Binzel (Member of the Planet Definition Committee)
* Karel van der Hucht (incoming Secretary General)

This press conference will conclude around 18:30 CEST [1630 UTC].

The IAU is the international astronomical organisation that brings together distinguished astronomers from all nations of the world. Its mission is to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects through international cooperation. Founded in 1919, the IAU is the world's largest professional body for astronomers. The IAU General Assembly is held every three years and is one of the largest and most diverse meetings on the astronomical community's calendar.

Contacts:

Following the vote, some of the members of the planet definition committee will be available for interviews (after the final vote):

Richard Binzel

Member of the Planet Definition Committee
Prague Conference Center, Meeting Room 3.1
Tel: +420−261−177−110

Junichi Watanabe
Member of the Planet Definition Committee
Prague Conference Center, Meeting Room 3.3
Tel: +420−261−177−081

Iwan Williams
President, IAU Division III Planetary Systems Sciences
Prague Conference Center, Meeting Room 244
Tel: +420−261−177−064

Owen Gingerich
Chair of the IAU Planet Definition Committee
Tel: via the Press Room +420−261−177−075

Professor Ron Ekers
IAU President
Tel: via the Press Room +420−261−177−075

Catherine Cesarsky
IAU President−Elect and member of the Planet Definition Committee
Tel: via the Press Room +420−261−177−075

PIO contact:

Lars Lindberg Christensen
IAU Press Officer
IAU GA 2006 Press office, Meeting Room 3.2
Prague Congress Center
Tel: +420−261−177−075/+420−261−222−130

Links

* Programme for the Closing Ceremony
http://www.astronomy2006.com/second−session−and−closing−ceremony.php
* Live public webcast of the Closing Ceremony
http://astronomy2006.com/tv/
* Live press webcast of the Closing Ceremony (press only, please do not distribute)
http://www.astronomy2006.com/tv−press
* The IAU Web page
http://www.iau.org
* IAU News during the 2006 General Assembly
http://www.iau2006.org

* IAU General Assembly
http://www.astronomy2006.com
* Free registration for the media
http://www.astronomy2006.com/media−accreditation.php

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 5A is the principal definition for the IAU usage of "planet" and related terms.

Resolution 6A creates for IAU usage a new class of objects, for which Pluto is the prototype. The IAU will set up a process to name these objects.

IAU Resolution: Definition of a Planet in the Solar System

Contemporary observations are changing our understanding of planetary systems, and it is important that our nomenclature for objects reflect our current understanding. This applies, in particular, to the designation 'planets'. The word 'planet' originally described 'wanderers' that were known only as moving lights in the sky. Recent discoveries lead us to create a new definition, which we can make using currently available scientific information.

RESOLUTION 5A

The IAU therefore resolves that "planets" and other bodies in our Solar System be defined into three distinct categories in the following way:

(1) A "planet" [1] is a celestial body that (a) is in orbit around the Sun, (b) has sufficient mass for its self−gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape, and (c) has cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit.

(2) A "dwarf planet" is a celestial body that (a) is in orbit around the Sun, (b) has sufficient mass for its self−gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape [2] , (c) has not cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit, and (d) is not a satellite.

(3) All other objects [3] except satellites orbiting the Sun shall be referred to collectively as "Small Solar−System Bodies".

[1] The eight planets are: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.
[2] An IAU process will be established to assign borderline objects into either dwarf planet and other categories.
[3] These currently include most of the Solar System asteroids, most Trans−Neptunian Objects (TNOs), comets, and other small bodies.

IAU Resolution: Pluto

RESOLUTION 6A

The IAU further resolves:

Pluto is a "dwarf planet" by the above definition and is recognized as the prototype of a new category of trans−Neptunian objects.

.