

Discovering the invisible: IYOG ushers in the Age of Glass

By Alicia Durán and John M. Parker

On Feb. 10–11, 2022, the United Nations International Year of Glass officially got underway when the international glass community took over the Human Rights Room in the Palace of Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, for the opening ceremony.

During the two-day event, 30 world-class speakers lectured on a multiplicity of glass-centric topics to an in-person audience of 135 glass experts, plus thousands more who joined via the United Nations Web TV. Several thousands more have since watched the session recordings, which are available at www.iyog2022.org.

The opening ceremony launched a packed program of worldwide events targeting a huge and eclectic audience. The IYOG website's events calendar currently lists 400 activities from 41 countries, with more added daily. Activities range from international congresses and trades fairs to streamed lectures and webinars, including competitions for schoolchildren, the design of a stained-glass window for a prescribed location, and equipping of primary schools with optical microscopes.

The rationale behind this International Year is not only to celebrate a material that is at the heart of society but also to focus and build on its capacity to help achieve many of the humanitarian aims embedded within the UN 2030 sustainable development goals. An inspirational video on glass and the UN goals

is available on YouTube in English, Spanish, Japanese, and Portuguese at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6ZEaWvlz6k>.

While a small executive committee organized the opening ceremony, the world is now subdivided into 18 regions, each with its own committee for organizing local events. Between these two bodies sits a Council with representatives from: a) each region; b) subgroups responsible for education, museums/art/history, and young people that transcend geographical boundaries; and c) the main glass associations and magazines. Events planned at the national level include the issue of celebratory postage stamps, identification of specific towns with economies based around glass, setting up twinning relationships, renaming streets... The list goes on.

Funding is critical to organizing these activities. Originally, a sponsorship program was created and largely run by Patrick Gavaghan of the Australian Centre for Glass Design to generate income for the opening ceremony. However, funds raised exceeded the costs incurred, so most of the unspent monies is being made available as seed funding for new activities in various formats. Organizers can apply for seed funding by emailing fundallocation@iyog2022.org. The first call for seed funding just closed; the second call will open on July 1.

In July, the International Commission on Glass's triennial Congress in Berlin will include a major celebration of glass and the centenary of the formation of the

German Society of Glass Technology. A closing ceremony in Japan in December will follow a reporting event at the UN in New York. The conference in Japan will acclaim the year's activities, emphasizing the scientific, technical, and longer-term outcomes, while New York will focus more on the organization and report success stories in achieving the UN goals.

The various events also serve as a vivid reminder of how IYOG participants are influenced by national and international events. For example, one recent lecture on Ukrainian stained glass concerned its preservation, while another talk from a museum in Lebanon explained their response to the loss of ancient glass artifacts destroyed in the chemical explosion two years ago. These more serious topics are counterbalanced by celebrations focused on fun, such as the opening and reopening of glass museums.

Six months of the year remain, and we remind you to consider attending some of the many IYOG events when planning your holidays. The legacy of our activities, like a silica glass bell, will resonate for many years to come.

About the authors

Alicia Durán is research professor for the Spanish Research Council and past president of the International Commission on Glass. John M. Parker is Emeritus Professor at The University of Sheffield. Contact Durán at aduran@icv.csic.es and Parker at j.m.parker@sheffield.ac.uk. ■



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