Opening Ceremony to Ring in the Launch of the International Year of Light 2015

To celebrate the start of the New Year and the [International Year of Light 2015 (IYL 2015)], an Opening Ceremony will be held on the 19-20 January 2015 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The Opening Ceremony will introduce all the key themes of the year, acting as an inspiration and model for raising awareness about the importance of light-based technologies and how light provides solutions to global challenges in areas such as energy, education, communications and health.

Over a thousand participants will convene in Paris for the two day event. Speakers and attendees will include international diplomats, decision-makers, Nobel laureates, CEOs, industry leaders and engineers from around the globe. After high-level opening addresses by international political leaders, a series of keynote lectures, symposiums and round-tables will cover areas from innovative lighting solutions for society and emerging trends in the photonics industry to the history of science and science policy. The ceremony will also feature an Einstein Centenary, talks on light in art and culture and presentations on how the roles of light-based technologies address global challenges.

Cultural music performances involving light will be included in the festivities and the UNESCO Building in Paris will be lit with a light display entitled “Light is Here,” by Finnish light artist Kari Kola, which will reflect the powerful elements of the Northern lights.

Keynote speakers from the light science community will include Nobel laureates Ahmed Zewail, Steven Chu, Zhores Alferov, William Phillips and Serge Haroche, pioneering and inspiring scientists who will speak on a diverse range of topics: light and life, energy, telecommunications, and the fundamental physics of light-matter interactions.

The IEEE Photonics Society’s guest luminary speaker Linda Wambune, from Sunny Money and Solar Aid (Kenya), will give a talk on how universal access to renewable energy, through a unique mix of business innovation and enterprise, is the best way to alleviate poverty in Africa. She will present details on Solar Aid’s mission to provide access to solar lights in some of the most remote regions of the world and explain the movement to eradicate the kerosene lamp by 2020.

“The Photonics Society is well-known for its outstanding publications and technical conferences, but the International Year of Light provides us with the opportunity to showcase a different aspect of our mission… namely our educational and humanitarian initiatives. Linda’s talk at the opening ceremony, Lighting up Africa, and our collaboration with Solar Aid will help us promote and expand these critical efforts,” said IEEE Photonics Society Executive Director Christopher Jannuzzi.

The program will also include contributions by: Gianfranco Cardinal Ravasi (President of the Pontifical Council for Culture); renowned Mexican architect Gustavo Avilés; the CEO of Royal Philips Lighting Eric Rondolat; Harry Verhaar (President of the Global Off-Grid Lighting Association); Alessandro Farini (Expert on Human Vision and Art); Thanh-Nga Tran, (Vietnam Vascular Anomalies Center); Martin Aufmuth (from onedollarglasses.org); Illac Diaz (aliteroflight.org); Andrew Forbes representing the Photonics Initiative of South Africa; Zohra Ben Lakhdar (UNESCO L’Oreal Prize Winner); and many other leading scientists and representatives from international NGOs.

“The presence of so many distinguished members of the international scientific community at the IYL 2015 Opening Ceremony exemplifies the diversity and global nature of this unique, year-long educational initiative,” said IEEE Photonics Society President Dalma Novak. “
About IYL 2015

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 will 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 IYL Global Secretariat is located at the Abdus Salam International Centre of Theoretical Physics (ICTP).

The Founding Partners of IYL 2015 are the American Institute of Physics (AIP), the American Physical Society (APS), the Deutsche Physikalische Gesellschaft (DPG), the European Physical Society (EPS), the Abdus Salam International Centre of Theoretical Physics (ICTP), the IEEE Photonics Society (IPS), the Institute of Physics (IOP), Light: Science and Applications, the lightsources.org International Network, 1001 Inventions, The Optical Society (OSA) and the International Society for Optics and Photonics (SPIE).

Patron Sponsors include Bosca, the International Association of Lighting Designers (IALD), Royal Philips Lighting, Thorlabs and UL.

For further information, visit: http://www.light2015.org

About Solar Aid

The IEEE Photonics Society has a humanitarian collaboration with SolarAid. SolarAid is an international charity that combats poverty and climate change by bringing critical lighting resources to the developing world. Solar Aid developed a social enterprise, called SunnyMoney, which is the leading seller of solar lights in Africa. SunnyMoney builds sustainable markets, creates jobs and ensures money stays in the local economy, with the goal of eradicating the kerosene lamp by 2020.

The IEEE Photonics Society is participating in Solar Aid’s "Speed of Light" Campaign, solar lamp donation drive. Individuals can sponsor a solar light for about $5 USD and track on an app where their donation goes. This collaborative humanitarian effort with Solar Aid innovatively enhances the breadth of our community and educational outreach offerings. The hope is that it will afford additional volunteering opportunities and provide our IEEE Photonics Society membership with an improved sense of well-being through direct giving and increased social awareness.

Solar Aid Video: http://bit.ly/1zupkQX

For further information on Solar Aid, visit: http://www.solar-aid.org/

Staff Contact:
Lauren Mecum
Membership Development Specialist
IEEE Photonics Society
L.Mecum@ieee.org