

International Day of Light 2026

Light, Science and Society: Advancing Innovation and Impact

13 May 2026 at 14:00 p.m. – 15:30 p.m. CET (online)

Registration link: https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_f7IH314YTRO9xCBJRO8SPg

Concept Note

Background

The International Day of Light, proclaimed by UNESCO, highlights the fundamental role of light-based technologies in advancing science, innovation, and international cooperation.

Among these technologies, **advanced light sources**, including synchrotron light sources, play a critical role in enabling scientific discovery and technological progress across a wide range of fields, including health, agriculture, energy, environmental science, and materials research. Beyond their scientific applications, these infrastructures also contribute to capacity building, knowledge exchange, and international collaboration, while generating significant socio-economic impact.

While significant progress has been made globally in the development of such infrastructures, disparities in access and participation persist across regions. These disparities can limit the ability of scientists and institutions to fully engage in global scientific ecosystems and to address locally relevant challenges.

In response, UNESCO has supported reflection and dialogue on pathways to strengthen access, capacity, and cooperation in this field, including through the publication “*Empowering Africa through Synchrotron Science*” Toolkit, which outlines practical approaches for engagement, partnership-building, and capacity development .

This reflection was further advanced during the UNESCO high-level event “*From Collaboration to Empowerment: Science Diplomacy and Capacity Building through Synchrotron Science in Africa*” (December 2025), which brought together policymakers, scientists, and international partners to explore how such infrastructures can serve as platforms for both scientific advancement and science diplomacy .

Building on this continuum, the present webinar, organized in the framework of the International Day of Light 2026, aims to provide a platform for **global dialogue and knowledge-sharing**, with a focus on the role of light-based research infrastructures in supporting inclusive scientific development, fostering innovation, and generating socio-economic impact.

Objectives

- Highlight the role of advanced light sources, including synchrotron light sources, in advancing scientific research and innovation;
- Share international experiences on the scientific, socio-economic and innovation impacts of light-based research infrastructures;
- Foster dialogue between scientific and policy communities on strengthening access, capacity, and participation in such infrastructures;
- Encourage knowledge exchange on approaches to developing scientific communities, capacity-building pathways, and collaborative frameworks;
- Contribute to ongoing reflections on how to enhance inclusive engagement of all regions in global scientific ecosystems.

Expected Outcomes

- Increase awareness of the role of advanced light sources, including synchrotron light sources, in scientific research and innovation;
- Promote knowledge-sharing on international experiences and good practices related to light-based research infrastructures;
- Strengthen dialogue between scientific and policy communities on issues of access, capacity, and participation;
- Encourage continued engagement of Member States and stakeholders in discussions related to scientific infrastructure and collaboration;
- Contribute to ongoing reflections on inclusive approaches to strengthening global scientific ecosystems.

Provisional Programme

Moderation: Basak Sendogan, Associate Project Officer, UNESCO

14:00 - 14:05	Opening Mr Shaofeng Hu , Director of the Division of Science Policy and Basic Sciences, UNESCO
14:05 – 14:20	Keynote Address Light Sources for Science and Innovation: Insights and Impact Prof Gianluigi Botton , CEO, Diamond Light Source, UK.
14:20 – 15:10	Panel Discussion: Synchrotron Light Sources: From Capacity Building to Scientific and Societal Impact <i>Moderator: Dr Amal Kasry, Chief of Section for Basic Sciences, Research, Innovation and Engineering, UNESCO</i> Panelists Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) and Ecosystem Perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Brando Okolo, Head of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) at African Union Development Agency (NEPAD) • Prof. Simon Connell, Chair of the African Light Source (AfLS) Foundation Facility and Implementation Perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Michał Perdjon, Coordinator for Research Consortia at SOLARIS, Poland • Dr Andrea Lausi, Scientific Director, SESAME Synchrotron, Jordan Researcher and User Perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Yemisi Afolabi, Research Chemist, Landmark University, Nigeria
15:10 – 15:25	Open Discussion
15:25 – 15:30	Closing Reflections: Science Diplomacy and Capacity Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Manuel Ricardo Galindo Moreno, Project Officer, UNESCO