

UNITED NATIONS
International Year of Glass 2022

Debriefing Event

13-14th December 2022

In the United Nations Building, New York

And the Hotel RIU, Times Square

Images: United Nations



**INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
GLASS
2022**

Introduction: The United Nations International Year of Glass 2022

And what a year!

For over half a century, the United Nations General Assembly has acknowledged important fields of human endeavour and their contributions to society by declaring International Years. And glassy materials, with their unparalleled versatility and technical capabilities have fostered numerous cultural and scientific advancements, heralding a more just and sustainable society.

So, the International Commission on Glass (ICG), the Community of Glass Associations (CGA) and the International Committee of Museums (ICOM) together promoted 2022 as a UN International Year of Glass to underline its technological, scientific and economic importance.

Following a successful application, 2022 gave the opportunity to broadcast this story to millions: at conferences, talks on- and off-line, in museums, at International Art Festivals, at garden shows and social gatherings, in Cathedrals and Art Galleries, Schools and Universities. Indeed, glass optical fibres have been a major conduit for sending this message across borders, across time-zones and in many different languages, coincidentally helping to break Covid's grip on our social and working lives. At the same time our phone's glass screens have made face-to-face communications possible between opposite sides of our globe whenever we want.

Glass is *the* chemically resistant container material for many of today's life-saving medicines. Particularly important in the fight to deliver life-saving vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic, it made the year a possibility and gave an opportunity to explain its wider role. For example, bioglass compositions can: integrate with human bone; stimulate the human body's natural defence to heal wounds; aid tissue regeneration and even resolve hearing and dental issues. 2022 has seen an explosion in energy costs. But glass has again come to the rescue, assisting solar cells to create clean energy; strengthening wind turbine blades as glass fibres, insulating our homes, and by carbon capture and sequestration (CCS). Meanwhile hazardous waste vitrification is increasing nuclear energy safety.

Glass melting is also being rapidly de-carbonised. 2022 has seen the first bulk production of sheet glass with a zero carbon footprint. Recycling is on everyone's lips and in the Philippines has generated an income stream sufficient to buy computers for schools in underprivileged areas.

Glass optics and optoelectronics have continued a rapid evolution. The James Webb space telescope is recording the very first moments after the big bang and, this year, has provided Mankind with many stunning images of astronomical highlights. Museums have displayed the development of microscopes - and microscopes donated to schools have stimulated STEM subjects worldwide.

Archaeologists have told their stories of ancient trade routes and the politics of raw materials. Many towns have explored their local heritage in greater depth: glass making towns in Spain have twinned with each other; life-saving lighthouses using glass Fresnel lenses are being mapped in school project worldwide, and ancient glass art in areas ravaged by war or human disaster has been restored.

Glass artists around the globe have made us aware of this wonderful material through displays in museums and art galleries and at Garden shows by demonstrating their remarkable fabrication techniques and the inherent beauty of glass with a facility to display nature's colour spectrum.

A closing ceremony in Japan (8-9th December), gave voice to scientists and technologists worldwide, an opportunity to share the common issues all are facing and promote the developments being imagined and acted on. This debriefing session at the United Nations Headquarters in New York (14th December) will unpack the many activities that have taken place, their positive impacts on society and explain to those that granted a United Nations stamp how IYOG2022 will send ripples into future years.

Yes, what a Year indeed.