



# Assemblies for the UN International Day of Peace

## 21 September



### ASSEMBLY 1: REACH FOR THE STARS



<http://www.astronomerswithoutborders.org/projects/reach-for-the-stars-afghanistan.html>

**This assembly celebrates the wonders of the night sky, the work of Reach for the Stars – Afghanistan, and the UN International Day of Peace.**

1. Read out the following words and ask the students if they know what you are talking about!  
-Acamar  
-Algol  
-Navi

Say that these are all the names of stars.

The name Acamar comes from an Arabic word meaning 'river's end'.

Algol is from an old Chinese word meaning 'head of the ogre'.

Navi is formed from the middle name of American astronaut Gus Ivan Grissom, who died in a fire during a pre-launch test for the Apollo 1 mission to land on the moon. Navi is Ivan backwards.

Many stars just have numbers. It is estimated that there are more stars in the universe than there are grains of sand on the Earth.

2. Many star names indicate that the stars form parts of pictures that ancient people made to connect groups of stars (or constellations) that they saw in the night sky. We still use some of these pictures today as a way of remembering star positions.

Wherever we are in the world we all see the same sky, even if we see different parts of it. That's why the names of the stars come from all over the planet. Many of the star names, such as Acamar, are Arabic in origin, evidence of ancient Islam's exploration of the night sky and the wonders of the universe.

3. An organisation called Astronomers without Borders believes that the wonders of the night sky belong to everyone. The night sky unites all of humanity. Its magnificent canopy has been a source of inspiration for all the peoples of Earth. Every culture has its own interpretation of the night sky, yet the language of the night sky is universal, connecting all the peoples of the world. It speaks to the very soul of every human. The night sky is a bridge between cultures and a source of inspiration that can change lives.

4. Astronomers without borders have set up a project called Reach for the Stars – Afghanistan. This aims to get children in Afghanistan interested in astronomy. They give schools, refugee camps and orphanages astronomy kits which they send free of charge. The kits include pencils, pens and papers, which many children don't have, even in schools.
5. Today (21 September) is the UN International Day of Peace. Special activities and celebrations will take place over the weekend, including festivals, concerts and a moment of silence at mid-day in every time zone. Peace Day marks our personal and planetary progress toward peace. It has grown to include millions of people in all parts of the world. Anyone anywhere can celebrate Peace Day. It can be as simple as lighting a candle at mid-day, or sitting in silent meditation.
6. International Day of Peace is also a Day of Ceasefire– personal and political. It is an opportunity to make peace in your own relationships – at home and in school - as well as for those fighting in larger conflicts to stop the violence. Of course, one day of ceasefire is only the beginning. The goal is to create lasting peace on all levels – personal, local and global. By showing that 24 hours of non-violence is within our reach, we set an important example. Peace is possible.
7. Afghans, are working hard to re-unify and rebuild their war torn country. To celebrate our shared humanity Astronomers without borders got children from Hawaii to make kites for the children in Afghanistan, as children from both these countries love to fly kites.
8. So, when you next look up at the night sky, or see a kite flying above, celebrate that the beauty of the sky belongs to the whole world and think of those struggling to live amidst war and poverty. Today, on peace day think of one thing that you can do to make your family, class or the wider world a more peaceful place.

Adapted from assembly by Gordon Lamont: [http://www.assemblies.org.uk/current\\_sec/oct12sec\\_stars.php](http://www.assemblies.org.uk/current_sec/oct12sec_stars.php)

If you have any Afghan students you may want to talk to them about this assembly in advance, to check how they feel about it.

For more information story see:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-17898331>

<http://www.indiegogo.com/reachforthestars?c=home>

<http://peaceoneday.org>

<http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org>

<http://www.photographyblogger.net/23-beautiful-kite-pictures/>

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