

Experiences and Final Report

International Moon Day 2026: Main Event

Bogotá, Colombia

Maloka Science Center

July 20, 2026

Watch the Full Event Recording

Click here to access the video on YouTube

1. Context and Event Reception

For the first time in history, Colombia and Latin America hosted the Main Event of the International Moon Day (IMD). Organized by Maloka, the National University of Colombia, the Moon Village Association (MVA), and the AESS student chapter of the National University, with the support of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Colombia, the event exceeded all expectations.

Event Impact at a Glance

- +**150 attendees** physically present at Maloka.
- +**50 attendees** following the live virtual broadcast.
- **Media Coverage:** Organizers gave interviews on national television (including a live segment on Caracol Televisión on the day of the event).
- **Diverse Audience:** General public, academia, military forces, and space enthusiasts.

The event successfully created a crucial space for reflection on the role of the region in the new space economy. It was not just a scientific gathering, but a cultural and strategic milestone that positioned Latin America as a proactive protagonist in the global space arena.



Figure 1: Organizers, speakers, and attendees at the IMD 2026 Main Event in Maloka.

2. Global Segment (Morning)

The day began with welcoming remarks from the co-hosts and national coordinators in Colombia, **Francisco Forero and Gabriela Cárdenas**, followed by a warm reception from Maloka, which opened its doors to the space community.

2.1. Institutional Messages

The global perspective was framed by a series of institutional videos. **Nasr Alsahhaf** (MVA) highlighted the importance of the IMD and its direct relationship with the MVA's mission. **Aarti Holla-Maini** (UNOOSA) offered a global overview, emphasizing the importance of Colombia's active participation in creating a community and contributing to space development as a region.

After the coffee break, the event featured messages from **Marco Antonio Chamon** (Brazilian Space Agency), who emphasized the need for regional countries to engage in lunar technology, and **Wu Weiren** (DSEL, China), who presented China's lunar objectives and the search for collaboration opportunities between both nations.

2.2. Keynotes and Discussions

- **Objective 2030: Garavito Crater:** Professor **Armando Higuera** (National Astronomical Observatory) narrated the history of the institution and highlighted a significant national asset: Colombia has a crater on the far side of the Moon. He proposed this crater as a common goal to develop a national mission carrying Colombian payloads to the lunar surface.
- **ATLAC (Action Team on Lunar Activities Consultation):** Dr. **Ulpia-Elena Botezatu** discussed the opportunities for cooperation from UNOOSA. She emphasized establishing a common framework for space exploration, improving space debris mitigation, and addressing potential conflicts in space law.
- **Colombia Looks Up:** Col. (r) **Raúl Gutiérrez** provided an overview of the Colombian space landscape, referencing the three satellites launched so far (Libertad 1, FACSAT 1, and FACSAT 2). He concluded on the urgent need to establish a Colombian space agency that unifies, combines, and finances the country's efforts.

2.3. Tribute to César Ocampo

Just before the roundtable, a heartfelt tribute was paid to the invaluable legacy of the Colombian aerospace engineer, recognizing his participation in NASA's lunar program and his work on the Copernicus program for mission design.

2.4. Roundtable: Latin American Space Law & Future Pathways

Moderated by **Gabriela Cárdenas**, the panel featured **Iván Luna** (Colombia), **Marcia Alvarenga** (Brazil), **Lucas Fonseca** (Brazil), and **Fermín Romero** (Mexico).

Extending over an hour, the discussion analyzed the space projects of these three countries and the legislative and state-support blockades they often face. The panelists concluded that to move forward, it is vital to correct these administrative hurdles, foster stronger public policies, and work collaboratively as a region to reach further.



Figure 2: Virtual speakers interacting during the global segment.



Figure 3: In-person moderators on the Maloka stage.

2.5. Morning Closing

The global segment concluded with remarks from Lt. Col. **Sonia Rincón**, who spoke about the current state of the country. She stressed the importance of working together in space matters to generate opportunities that not only help us understand space but also allow us to rediscover and protect our own territory and resources.

3. Regional Segment (Afternoon)

After the lunch break, the afternoon session focused on Latin American capabilities, scientific contributions, and indigenous perspectives.

- **Project Colmena (Mexico):** Dr. **Gustavo Medina Tanco** (UNAM) presented the ambitious project that sought to deploy Mexican lunar robots. Despite the mission's failure to deploy them, he shared the valuable lessons learned and how the country continues working to establish a space presence.
- **Lunar Geology from Latin America: David Tovar** explained how the region can contribute to lunar studies through data processing and the analysis of lunar and Martian analogues. He also provided a fascinating overview of the history and composition of the Moon.
- **Indigenous Perspectives: Mutauta Kasiguelas Troches**, a member of the Misak indigenous community from Cauca, shared her people's vision of the sky and the Moon. She

highlighted the importance of indigenous cosmovision and its direct relationship with everyday life and nature.

- **Moon Village Association and IMD:** The final session covered the history of the IMD, its declaration by UNOOSA, and an invitation to organize global events. The event concluded with words from the MVA national coordinator in Mexico and a closing video by **Rodrigo Vesule**.



Figure 4: Regional perspectives on space strategy.



Figure 5: Discussing the future of space exploration.

4. Highlights of the Day

- **Chang'e 5 Model Exhibition:** Thanks to the Embassy of China and DSEL, a 1:50 scale model of the Chang'e 5 probe was exhibited. This element was a major attraction and excited attendees, who took photos with it throughout the day, serving as a tangible symbol of international cooperation.
- **Maloka's Unwavering Support:** The incredible support from Maloka was pivotal. They provided a fascinating, world-class venue that allowed for a meaningful connection with the general public, academia, and military personnel.
- **Networking and Community Building:** Beyond the talks, the event served as a critical networking hub, connecting students, professionals, and government entities to discuss the future of the Colombian and Latin American space sectors.



Figure 6: Scale models of the rocket and the lunar lander, a major attraction for attendees.



Figure 7: Co-hosts Gabriela Cárdenas and Francisco Forero with the event speakers.



Figure 8: Logistics team members alongside the co-hosts.

5. Organizational Impact and Reflections

From the perspective of the organizing committee, the development of this event was a highly positive and enriching experience. It involved a comprehensive process of planning, contacting institutional allies, and coordinating logistics to bring together key figures in the space sector. This effort allowed the team to establish valuable connections with prominent leaders and experts, which were crucial for the success of the event.

Both for the organizers and for Maloka, hosting this Main Event was incredibly significant. It allowed us to open a necessary space for high-level discussions, positioning our institutions as active promoters of the space conversation in Colombia and Latin America. The positive feedback from the participants confirmed that creating these meeting points is essential to inspire future generations and strengthen the regional space ecosystem.

6. Conclusion

The IMD 2026 Main Event in Colombia was a historic milestone for the region. It represented a moment of deep reflection on the global landscape and the urgent need for Colombia to advance in the space era, not just out of scientific curiosity, but from a genuine desire to improve the quality of life of its people by understanding and protecting its territory from space.

As concluded in the final reflections, the path to the Moon, evidenced by missions like Artemis 2, is a golden opportunity to rediscover our own home, understand who we are as humanity, and protect the only planet we can inhabit.

Appendix: Final Event Agenda

Time (COL)	Activity
8:00 - 9:00	Attendee registration and welcome reception
9:00 - 9:30	**Opening Remarks:** Francisco Forero and Gabriela Cárdenas (Co-hosts)
	Welcome to Maloka
	Institutional Videos: Nasr Alsahhaf (MVA), Aarti Holla-Maini (UNOOSA)
9:30 - 9:50	**Objective 2030: Garavito Crater** by Armando Higuera (OAN, Colombia)
9:50 - 10:15	**ATLAC** by Dra. Ulpia-Elena Botezatu (Romanian Space Agency / MVA)
10:15 - 10:40	**Colombia Looks Up** by Col. (r) Raúl E. Gutiérrez (NSS Colombia)
10:40 - 11:00	*Coffee Break*
11:00 - 11:15	Institutional Video: Marco Antonio Chamon (Brazilian Space Agency)
11:15 - 11:35	Institutional Video: Wu Weiren (DSEL, China)
11:35 - 11:45	**Tribute to César Ocampo** (Video and Remarks)
11:45 - 12:50	**Roundtable: Latin American Space Law and Future Pathways**
	Moderator: Gabriela Cárdenas
	Panelists: Iván Luna (COL), Marcia Alvarenga (BRA), Lucas Fonseca (BRA), Fermín Romero (MEX)
12:50 - 13:00	**Closing Remarks (Global Segment)** by Lt. Col. Sonia Ruth Rincón Urbina
13:00 - 14:10	*Lunch Break and Networking*
14:10 - 14:40	**Project Colmena (Mexico)** by Dr. Gustavo Medina Tanco (UNAM)
14:40 - 15:10	**Lunar Geology from Latin America** by David Tovar (Colombia)
15:10 - 15:30	*Coffee Break*
15:30 - 15:55	**Indigenous Perspectives on the Moon** by Mutauta Kasiguelas Troches (Misak Community)
15:55 - 16:25	**MVA and International Moon Day** by Rodrigo Vesule and Francisco Forero
16:25 - 16:35	Closing Remarks and Next Steps
16:35 - 17:00	*Networking and End of Event*