



GOBIERNO DE CHILE

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SECRETARÍA DE COMUNICACIONES

NEWS

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President Michelle Bachelet at the opening of Tenth Session of the Regional Conference on Women. Quito, Ecuador.

Increasing citizen participation

A proposed constitutional reform – known as the citizens’ or popular legal initiative – would make it possible, for the first time, for laws to originate from the citizenry as well as from the President of the Republic, the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate.

The initiative would allow groups of citizens to present requests to Congress for legislation in specific areas of interest, that are reflected in the Constitution and other legislation. If a request is accepted – and if it receives the required support from the citizens as well as validation from the Electoral Service – it would enter the legislative process under the same terms as other bills presented to Congress.

In presenting this proposal to the legislature, President Michelle Bachelet stressed that “the new participation channel will be open to all sectors of the country, to the diverse currents of thought and enormous range of positions and proposals arising from our society and from every corner of our country.” The idea is that the new mechanism will help strengthen democratic practice, enhance the quality of politics and expand opportunities for citizen participation.



A citizen describes her expectations to the audience in Valparaiso.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ★ The Chilean national under-20 soccer team placed third in the world competition for that age group held in Canada in July. Goalkeeper Christopher Toselli set a new record, holding his opponents scoreless for 492 minutes.
- ★ The Chilean polo team won its third consecutive victory against England at the Coronation Cup, one of the world’s most prestigious competitions. The trophy was presented to captain José Donoso by Prince Michael of Kent, who also paid homage to Donoso’s brother Gabriel, a rider who died after a fall in Argentina last year.
- ★ Great interest in Chilean items has been shown at international auction houses such as Sotheby’s and Christie’s. Among the most noteworthy auctions: 12 bottles of Chilean wine for 500 dollars, and the official poster for soccer’s 1962 World Cup – hosted by Chile – for 6,700 dollars. The painting *Tige Verte (Les Possessions)* by Roberto Matta sold for 2,168,000 dollars, and it is estimated that a newly discovered manuscript or letter by Pablo Neruda would bring between 5,000 and 30,000 dollars at auction.

Toward the 2007 Ibero-American Summit

Two important meetings took place in Chile in July, as part of the preparations for the 17th Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, which will be held in Chile from November 8 to 10.

Under the theme of “Social Cohesion and Inclusive Educational Policies in Ibero-America,” ministers and vice ministers of education from the 22 member countries addressed conditions in the region at a gathering in Viña del Mar. Ideas were set forth to create greater opportunities for cooperation, interchange and the transfer of

QUOTES FROM PRESIDENT BACHELET

"A country which is growing like ours, developing as Chile is doing, reaching the levels of modernity enjoyed by our nation, and also making progress in improving its inhabitants' quality of life, must recognize very clearly that extreme inequality is an unacceptable shame."

Santiago, August 8, 2007.



"The achievement of a political, economic and cooperation association agreement between our countries would constitute a historic step in our relations, because it would also allow the institutional

strengthening of our bilateral relationship. Both President Correa and I recognize that the ties of brotherhood and friendship between our peoples will allow the areas of common interest we have identified to be translated into concrete benefits for our populations."

At a working meeting with Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa. Quito, August 6, 2007.

"The recovery of these writings also represents a contribution by Chile to an American hemisphere which recognizes itself in its diversity and values its plurality – an America which speaks Spanish and Portuguese, which knows the rhythms of the Caribbean and the austerity of the high plains, which has many voices, many accents and many poetries."

On the legacy of Gabriela Mistral. Valparaiso, July 27, 2007.

"The path we have taken in Chile is recognized around the world. We had deficiencies in our institutions, but now we have an institutional structure dedicated to probity and transparency which places us among the most advanced countries. With these initiatives for personnel training and transparency, we can say, without fear of contradiction, that we have been fulfilling our commitment: Chile is more transparent today than it was yesterday."

At the promulgation of the first legislation from the Probity and Transparency Agenda. La Moneda Palace. Santiago, July 13, 2007.

experiences. The Valparaíso Declaration affirmed the State's duty to pursue policies that reinforce inclusion and social cohesion through equitable and high-quality education; to prevent, correct and reverse all forms of discrimination; to commit itself to eradicating illiteracy; and to universalize basic education.



The main topic of the Culture Conference was social and cultural cohesion in Ibero-American countries. The agreements reached included: forming a working group to design a plan to promote cultural and social cohesion policies; gradually raising the proportion of each State's general budget dedicated to culture to a minimum of 1%; including intercultural dialogue in Ibero-American cooperation initiatives; and preparing a shared agenda for bicentennial celebrations in the nations of the Americas.

Expanding cooperation with the European Union

A scholarship fund for university students and new financial resources to support small and medium-sized Chilean businesses are among the measures included in the new Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation for the 2007-2013 period, signed by the European Union and Chile.

The plan, approved on July 24 during the Third EU-Chile Association Council, held in Brussels, will focus on projects in three high-priority areas for both partners: social cohesion; higher education; and innovation and competitiveness. Toward this aim, a university scholarship fund of over 8 million euros will be set up, aimed at 500 young people from across Chile who will be the first generation in their families to seek higher education. Some 16 million euros will also be provided to support innovation and competitiveness among small and medium-sized Chilean enterprises, helping them to enter the new export markets which are opening up in Europe.

FACTS

The United Nations honored the Web portal ChileCompra as a “public service of excellence” on the global level, praising its contributions to promoting transparency. The UN Public Service Award was presented within the framework of the Seventh World Forum on the Reinvention of Government.

Chile leads Latin America in the design and use of solar cooking devices, thanks to support from the Global Environment Fund, which is channeled through the Small Subsidies Program and administered in Chile by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). With more than 20 years of design and development in Chile, the solar cookers represent one of the region’s leading advances in this technology.



Chile’s copper exports increased by 20.9% during the first half of the year, with sales totaling 19.394 billion dollars. This figure is the best in history for the metal in this segment of the year.

During the Brussels gathering, attended by Chilean Foreign Minister Alejandro Foxley, participants also analyzed the fruitful bilateral relationship which has developed since the Agreement was signed in 2002. Referring to the future of the EU-Chile relationship, Foreign Minister Foxley noted that “we have discussed some proposals which may be attractive not only for our country, but also for Latin America as a whole, because another of our objectives is to promote an increased political presence for the EU in the region.”



Foreign Minister Foxley and his Portuguese peer, Luis Amado

Digital strategy at the country’s service

During the past ten years, Chile has successfully expanded the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) among individuals and businesses.

The foundation for this success has been the country’s Digital Agenda, an array of initiatives aimed at promoting mass public and private access to the Internet, providing education and training to the public, and significantly increasing the on line offerings of government services. All public services now have websites; information about more than 1,500 public offices is available on the Web; and more than 400 official transactions can be completed on line, including public purchasing, payment of taxes and many others.

The country has also set up programs to provide Internet access for the population, with a network of some 800 “Infocentros” across the country; the Enlaces program, which currently connects 6,771 schools; and a digital literacy campaign which has trained over 976,000 individuals since 2003. Today, more than a million Chileans have access to the Internet, 87% of them with broadband connections, along with 68% of the country’s businesses.



The 2007-2010 Digital Strategy – an updated plan of action involving the State, the private sector and the citizens – was unveiled by the Ministry of Economy. Its challenges include creating an institutional structure for digital development; expanding the public sector’s ability to design and execute ICT projects; promoting the use of ICT in the business world; and doubling the proportion of the population with access to the Internet.

OVERHEARD

"I think that the current President of Chile has been doing terrific work, and seems to be a very thoughtful person. Part of what I am seeing in her and many other leaders in Latin America, and hopefully that we are going to see in the United States, is a de-emphasis on ideology and more emphasis on practical solutions."

Barack Obama, U.S. Senator.
United States, July 26, 2007.

"Chile has always been on the first list with respect to the standards it maintains for its aquaculture and fisheries exports. I can confirm that they follow very strict rules. Only some ten countries are in this group – among them New Zealand, Canada, Australia and Morocco – which consistently ensure a high level of sanitation. We have never had problems with Chile; it is a country which gives us numerous guarantees."

Pablo Caricato, administrator of the Hygiene and Control Measures Unit of the European Commission's Health and Consumer Protection Directorate-General. Santiago, July 23, 2007.

"In Sweden, we are very aware that Chile is the country which has made the most progress in mining within South America. Two Swedish companies, Sandvik and Atlas Copco, develop a large amount of mining equipment and are very active in Chile. In Sweden, Chile enjoys an excellent reputation; it is the most developed country in South America today, and it has been invited to join the OECD."

Hans Jeppson, State Secretary to the Swedish Minister for Foreign Trade.
Santiago, July 19, 2007.

"It is a great pleasure for me to be in Chile. Ten years after the signing of the FTA between Chile and Canada, I am happy to point to the success of

our trade relations, and even more importantly, I look with interest at the possibilities of strengthening our commitments in areas of mutual interest. Canada is proud to be the third leading investor in Chile,

contributing to creating local jobs and strengthening environmental standards, thanks to our agreements in these areas."

Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada.
Santiago, July 17, 2007.



Gabriela Mistral: the legacy of a great artist

An impressive find consisting of thousands of unknown writings by Gabriela Mistral has been uncovered at the Massachusetts home of the Chilean poet's executrix, Doris Dana, who died last November. According to a preliminary analysis, the findings will double the volume of Mistral's known works.



This "treasure," as it has been called by poetry experts, includes 100 poems written between 1919 and 1955, 500 previously unknown letters and five leather albums containing photographs of Gabriela and her family. Notable among the letters are those addressed – some of them never sent – to former Chilean President Eduardo Frei Montalva; painter Delia del Carril, Pablo Neruda's companion for 20 years; Neruda himself; Thomas Mann; and Jacques Maritain.



Gabriela and Doris Dana

The material will be transferred to Chile after it has been fully examined, classified and appraised, most likely in late 2008. Doris Atkinson, the niece of Doris Dana and current executrix of the works, has decided that they should be sent to Chile, judging that adequate conditions are available there for their conservation. The National Library in Santiago has already prepared two climate- and humidity-controlled vaults to preserve the documents.

Our Lady of Carmel: Chile's patron

This year, for the first time, thousands of the faithful throughout Chile will celebrate a public holiday dedicated to the Virgin of Carmel. A new law enacted early this year sets aside each July 16 to celebrate and honor Chile's patron saint.

Our Lady of Carmel played a key role in the country's struggle for independence. Soldiers prayed to her during each battle for protection. Bernardo O'Higgins – the founding



CHILEANS AROUND THE WORLD

Chilean physician Fernando Zegers was honored in France with the 2007 Clinical Science Award, which named him Scientist of the Year for his contributions to reproductive medicine, according to the European Society for Human Reproduction. The award is the highest recognition in this specialty.

Recently retired Chilean jockey José Santos was inducted into the Hall of Fame for U.S. horse racing, in recognition of his long and impressive career. His 4,076 victories in North American races, with winnings of 186.9 million dollars, make him one of the sport's ten best of all time. He is the first South American jockey to receive this honor.



The New York Times extensively praised the play *Gemelos* ("Twins"), presented at the Lincoln Center Festival in New York by Chilean theater company Teatro Cinema. The company was Chile's first to be invited to this international event.



AGENDA

- ★ September 2-5: Official Work Visit of President Michelle Bachelet to Japan.
- ★ September 8-9: President Bachelet attends the APEC Summit of Heads of State and Government. Sydney, Australia.

father of Chile's independence and its first Head of State – proclaimed her Patron and Generalísima of Chile's armed forces on the eve of the Battle of Chacabuco. On March 14, 1818, O'Higgins elevated her to Patron of the Nation, promising to erect a sanctuary in her honor. The construction was delayed, but it was finally dedicated on April 5, 1892. The Virgin of Carmen was officially named Chile's patron saint in 1923 and solemnly crowned in 1926. In 1974, the sanctuary was inaugurated as the Votive Temple of Maipú, in honor of the site where independence was won.



Golden Age tourism

For the seventh consecutive year, the "Golden Age Vacations" program, an initiative of the National Tourism Service (Sernatur), has been launched for the season. The program is aimed at senior citizens over the age of 60 as well as disabled individuals. This year, more than 32,000 senior travelers will visit 13 different destinations – ranging from Arica, the country's northern port city, to Chiloé, 1,100 kilometers south of Santiago – during the low tourist season.



Sernatur subsidizes some 40% of these vacation packages, which also feature special off-season prices. In addition, a benefit has been provided during the past two years for the neediest travelers, covering up to 90% of the package value. In total, more than 136,000 seniors have taken advantage of the program's offerings during its first six years of operation.

In a 2006 survey, 88% of the program's participants reported that their vacation increased their quality of life; 86% believed that their health improved after their journey; 84% reported an improvement in their mental state; and 88% made new friends during their trip. High levels of satisfaction were also reported with all of the program's services.



PLACES OF CHILE

Villa Las Estrellas: living at the end of the world



The first Chilean civil settlement on the Antarctic continent is known as Villa las Estrellas founding in 1984. It forms part of Eduardo Frei Montalva Air Force Base, 990 kilometers from Punta Arenas, in Chile's extreme south, which served as a logistical center for scientific expeditions as well as one of the three meteorological and navigational stations on the frozen continent.

Eighteen modular structures stand out starkly against the white landscape; 14 are homes, while the rest are occupied by visiting technical and professional staff. Although only 80 individuals, belonging to 11 families, live here – six from the Air Force, one family of professors, three from the Aeronautics Administration and one from the Chilean Antarctic Institute – they enjoy all of the necessary conveniences: a school, bank, hospital, supermarket, chapel, post



office, civil registry, library, satellite phone system, cellular tower, local radio station and satellite TV. The television system, which allows residents to watch Chile's *Televisión Nacional*, is received by all of the foreign bases in Antarctica.

At Villa Las Estrellas' School F-50, two teachers provide instruction to nine students: five at the elementary level, three in secondary studies and one auditor. They have Internet access and are connected to the Enlaces educational network, where they are undertaking a project to publicize the zone through videoconferences, chats and web pages. Their efforts will be exhibited at the end of the year in Punta Arenas.

During the past few years, the settlement has also become the entry

port for Antarctic tourism, especially in summer, when temperatures "soar" to zero degrees Centigrade. Two companies offer direct flights from Punta Arenas to Villa las Estrellas, where the Estrella Polar Inn has room for 80 guests. In a small shopping area, visitors – mainly scientists and researchers – can buy souvenirs, with the proceeds going to benefit the National Council for the Protection of the Elderly (Conapran).

Villa las Estrellas also hosts cultural activities, such as the Antarctic Song Festival, organized by the Chilean Air Force, scientists and family members to celebrate the institution's yearly anniversary. The most recent festival featured delegations from the bases maintained by China, South Korea, Russia and Uruguay, which also participate in the Antarctic Marathon each February.

A 100-meter rope lift and a sports complex with facilities for tennis, youth soccer, basketball and volleyball – as well as fitness machines, ping-pong tables, changing rooms and a sauna – round out the amenities of a settlement which has nothing to envy among its neighbors on the continent.



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