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President Michelle Bachelet with the President of Salvador, Mauricio Funes.

Message with social emphasis

Stressing the country's great social transformations and a State which today protects its people more effectively and is becoming increasingly citizen-oriented, President Michelle Bachelet reviewed her administration's accomplishments and outlined the tasks for the future in her Message to the Nation, presented before the National Congress on May 21.

In a year marked by the international economic crisis, she began her remarks by addressing the challenge of reducing its impact on individuals. Toward this aim, she announced the issuance in August of an additional special payment of 70 dollars, aimed at four million people in the country's most vulnerable households. The measure joins the payment issued in March for the same amount, delivered to 1,700,000 Chileans. The President further announced the accelerated implementation of the Pension Reform, with an increase in solidarity pension coverage from 45% to 50%, as well as a rise in the maximum pension eligible for solidarity contributions, benefiting 950,000 people.



In housing, 15,000 new support grants will be offered to help protect families' assets, along with 10,000 new housing subsidies. In addition, the resources assigned to the Housing Solidarity Fund will be increased by 20%, and an insurance system will be set up for beneficiaries who become unemployed.

In education, the President announced the delivery of 60,000 new computers to the highest-achieving students among the most vulnerable 60% of the population, doubling the figure of 30,000 already provided under the program. To reassure financially vulnerable students, she made available guaranteed credits to ensure that young people are not forced to abandon their studies due to family unemployment. The country will also offer 2,000 new scholarships in English, 3,500 postgraduate scholarships, and 15,000 additional scholarships for technical education — bringing the total to 50,000 — as well as implementing a national program to train school directors.

In the area of energy, she pointed to a competition for the construction of a solar concentration plant, the installation of a photovoltaic center in San Pedro de Atacama, new wind and geothermal projects, and the production of biofuels from algae.

In other fields, she reported "unprecedented investments" in 18 sports facilities throughout the country, the remodeling of the National Stadium, and an increase in coverage for the child-oriented Chile Crece Contigo ("Chile Grows With You") program to 50% by 2010. "These achievements are the fruit of our prudent economic management in recent years," declared the President.

DID YOU KNOW?

★ The Patio of the Orange Trees, in La Moneda Palace, contains one of the city's most important treasures: the freshwater spring which supplied water to Santiago's inhabitants for a century and a half.



★ The gusts of Antarctic wind that sweep the surface of King George Island, 1,200 kilometers south of Punta Arenas, will be utilized by the Chilean Air Force to provide electricity to Villa Las Estrellas and President Eduardo Frei Montalva Base. The three wind turbines will replace the current diesel generators.

★ Mezzo-soprano María Pastén Curilén has recorded *La Habanera*, from Bizet's opera *Carmen*, in the Mapuche language, Mapudungún. The translation was provided by Mapuche leaders from the Municipality of Cerro Navia, Santiago, and the singer's mother accompanied the melody with a *cultrún*, a Mapuche percussion instrument.

QUOTES FROM PRESIDENT BACHELET

"Allow me to observe to you that we women know how to hold positions without excluding anyone. Chile becomes greater when its women are also protagonists. Because of this, I maintain that our government is now more citizen-oriented than it was in the past."

From her Message to the Nation.
Valparaíso, May 21, 2009.

"It is extraordinarily relevant, for our life as a country, that these measures emanate from an agreement among representatives of both workers and employers."

At the signing of the National Agreement for
Employment, Training and Labor Protection.
Santiago, May 6, 2009.

"Few political institutions in the world enjoy the confidence and respect which our community has offered to Chile's Carabineros. The institution can feel justifiably proud of having forged this solid foundation of trust, which is one of the pillars of our democracy and the rule of law in our country. The Carabineros of Chile belong to Chile, to its people, to all of us."

After participating in the 82nd anniversary
ceremony of Chile's Carabineros (uniformed
police service). Santiago, April 27, 2009.

"This represents a historic step, placing Chile in a leading position in the world in the area of transparency and access to information. Yet it has only been possible for us to achieve trunks to the changes we have promoted in our democracy, with the aim of making the State more and more transparent."

Upon welcoming the Transparency Council to La
Moneda Palace. Santiago, April 16, 2009.

President Bachelet's tour of France also included a visit to the land of her ancestors. In Chassagne Montrachet, the origin of the Bachelet family, she was warmly received by local citizens. Accompanied by the mayor, she toured her family's ancestral home and attended the inauguration of a park named "Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile." She was also declared an illustrious citizen of Dijon, in the Burgundy region.



Visits to the Netherlands and France

Enthusiastic media coverage greeted President Michelle Bachelet's visits to the Netherlands and France in late May.

In the Netherlands, the President was welcomed by Queen Beatrix, who accompanied her for several events, including a gala banquet and a farewell ceremony at the airport. "This will be a very intense tour, full of agreements," asserted the President at the start of her State Visit. With the Queen, she pointed to the highly advanced level of bilateral relations between Chile and the Netherlands. Later, she visited the University of Leiden, where she was guest lecturer at a graduate seminar entitled "Consolidating Democracy in Latin America." She declared that the region has left dictatorships behind, and now "the great majorities have come to power."



On the following day, she visited the Anne Frank House, an icon of human rights in the country, and also met with Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende. The two leaders affirmed that trade is a fundamental element for both countries' development, emphasized their interest in further efforts in the field of energy, and pointed to the need for increased cooperation in education, with initiatives such as postgraduate exchange programs. The President later praised the work of the International Criminal Court while carrying out the first visit of a Chilean Head of State to the institution.

Before leaving for France, she signed an important agricultural cooperation agreement, aimed at creating a world-class research center in Chile and reinforcing cooperation in the sciences, trade, and the development of farming, ranching and food production in both countries.

During her Official Visit in Paris, she signed a declaration of intent between Chile's government and UNESCO for a project entitled "Capacity Building for Local Communities and Sustainable Ecotourism on Easter Island." She later visited OECD headquarters, where she attended a working meeting with secretary general Angel Gurría and asserted that Chile is advancing with firm strides toward full development. Afterward, she met with the Prime Minister of France, Francois Fillon.



Inaugurating a Chile-France business seminar, she invited French entrepreneurs to view Chile as "a potential partner, a place to invest and undertake interesting projects." At the Élysée Palace, she attended a working lunch with President Nicolas Sarkozy, with whom she stressed the need for increased cooperation between the two countries. The leaders announced the upcoming creation of a joint working group to address the international financial crisis, as well as a visit by President Sarkozy to Chile in the near future.

Later, President Bachelet toured the facilities of EADS Astrium, the company which is currently building a Chilean satellite. The craft will help gather valuable information on crops and fisheries, while also assisting in the prediction and monitoring of natural disasters.

FACTS

The World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme positively evaluated the Chilean government's programs to assist the poor, pointing especially to the Chile Solidario.

Chile ranks 25th in world competitiveness, maintaining its leadership in Latin America, according to the 2009 report from Switzerland's Institute of Management Development (IMD). The organization cited the country's resilience in the face of the economic crisis.

The most recent report from the Financial Stability Forum (FSF), an organization which assesses the strength of financial systems, placed Chile 22nd out of 80 countries for its financial stability and its prospects for recovery from the crisis. The evaluation emphasized the country's prudent monetary and fiscal policies.

The Mapocho Station Cultural Center — a former train station, declared a National Monument in 1976 — took top honors in the "Physical Patrimony" category of Spain's sixth annual Queen Sofia International Awards for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage. The jury members praised the country's "extensive efforts to rehabilitate the site."

The Council of Ministers of the National Environmental Commission approved a national policy to protect Chile's glaciers. The initiative will help conserve the ice masses, which account for 80% of the country's fresh water.



Achieving transparency

The groundbreaking initiative announced in Chile News 96 has now become reality: the Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information, also called the Transparency Law, has entered into force.



Hailed across the political spectrum as a historic achievement, the law sets transparency standards for public officials and defines the specific types of information which government offices and services must maintain in updated form on their websites. It also establishes procedures for exercising the right to request and access public information, and sets up a new autonomous body, the Transparency Council, to oversee the law's fulfillment.

A total of 264 government offices must now begin to enhance the transparency of their information, including ministries, public services, municipalities, mayors' offices, regional governments, the presidency, Congress, the Comptroller's Office, the Central Bank, the Public Ministry, the Constitutional Court, the judicial system, the Armed Forces and the police services. These organizations must keep the public informed about the details of all official purchases, contracts for goods and services, the types of contracts and benefits received, and the compensation of 270,000 public employees.

Since its entry into force on April 20, the law has been positively received by government authorities as well as the thousands of Chileans who have already requested information.

Meeting for human rights

From April 28 to 30, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) convened in Chile's former National Congress for its Thirty-Ninth Extraordinary Session, in response to an invitation issued by President Bachelet in November 2008. The session included two public hearings, focused on cases from Brazil and Mexico.

The Court's president, Chilean Cecilia Medina, along with other Court members from a range of Latin American countries, signed a cooperation agreement with Chile's acting Foreign Minister Alberto van Klaveren involving the IACHR, the Foreign Ministry and the Andrés Bello Diplomatic Academy.

Promoting employment

Chile has not paused in its efforts to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis. In early May, delegates representing workers, businesses and the government signed the National Agreement for Employment, Training and Labor Protection, aimed at preserving jobs. The successful "social dialogue" was hailed as historic by all of its participants.

The plan includes six initiatives: five aimed at supporting worker training as an alternative to unemployment, and one which broadens the unemployment insurance program to workers with temporary contracts. It also provides scholarships and subsidies for the employment of female heads of household. "We are taking a new and very relevant step. We are looking toward the future and acting with a national vision," stated the President.

Involving an investment of 270 million dollars, the plan will benefit 125,000 people upon its entry into force and is projected to prevent a rise in unemployment of up to 1.5 percentage points. The pact joins the Fiscal Stimulus Plan announced in January, which generated 113,000 jobs by the end of the first quarter.

OVERHEARD

"Chile has been exemplary in its economic management (...) We are well advanced in the process of Chile's membership (in the OECD)."

Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary General.
Paris, May 28, 2009.

"It has been an outstanding visit (to the Netherlands); she is a delightful person and a great Head of State, and all of the Dutch people are welcoming her in this spirit. Today, she delivered a graduate seminar on democracy, freedom, and the development of the peoples of Latin America, and the questions afterward allowed her to develop the topic even further".

Allan Wagner, Peruvian representative to the International Court of Justice, The Hague.
The Hague, May 25, 2009.

"This (free trade) agreement with Chile comes at such a favorable moment, a moment when we must stand together to face this economic crisis. Let us take the opportunity to invoke this agreement in the hope that Chilean investors will become more closely involved in Colombia."

Alvaro Uribe, President of Colombia.
Bogota, May 18, 2009.

"In Chile, the fiscal environment is radically different from that of other countries. The stimulus is much more modest than in the United States; you do not need to go into debt to finance your economic programs. You have ample savings to do so".

John Cochrane, professor at the University of Chicago.
Santiago, April 28, 2009.

"We are pleased to observe that our countries are currently committed to negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which promises even better relations between Malaysia and Chile. Chile will be the first Latin American country to have an FTA with Malaysia."

Mizan Zainal Abidin, King of Malaysia.
Santiago, April 20, 2009.



Summit of the Americas

On April 18 and 19, President Bachelet attended the Fifth Summit of the Americas, held in Trinidad and Tobago. The assembled national leaders analyzed the current economic crisis and its implications for the region, and welcomed the new President of the United States, Barack Obama, to their ranks.



President Bachelet was called upon to play a leading role in one of the summit's most important encounters: the meeting between the Presidents of the South American Union (Unasur) and the U.S. President. As President pro tempore of Unasur, she greeted the occasion as a first step in building confidence between the United States and South America. "All of the Unasur

Presidents view with great hope the winds of change which are reflected in numerous initiatives," she reported.

The President also chaired important working sessions. In "Human Prosperity," she offered three basic proposals to address the international financial crisis: achieving rapid and equitable implementation of the agreements reached at the G-20 summit; obtaining a political commitment for urgent capitalization from the Inter-American Development Bank; and mobilization to prevent social crises. In the "Energy Security" session, she announced Chile's creation of a Center for Renewable and Non-Conventional Energy Research and Knowledge Transfer, which will be available to all countries in the region.

Malaysian royalty in Chile

On April 20, President Bachelet welcomed the King of Malaysia, Mizan Zainal Abidin, and Queen Nur Zahirah to La Moneda Palace for a State Visit to the country.

Bilateral relations between Chile and Malaysia received a strong boost from the Asian country's support for Chile's entry into APEC. Among their most recent agreements are a treaty to avoid double taxation and prevent income tax evasion (2004) and a Memorandum of Understanding on Antarctic Cooperation, signed in March 2007. The two nations are currently negotiating a Free Trade Agreement.



Initiative for Chilean species

Recognized around the world for their outstanding quality and flavor, Chilean seafood products have enjoyed significant export growth in recent years. To support their continued success, the Biotechnology Center of the University of Concepción, in the Bío Bío Region, is creating the first genetic bank for endemic marine species. In addition to scientifically determining the organisms' point of origin by identifying specific genes, the project will also help ensure that material crossing borders is not contaminated.

The genetic bank – the world's fourth and the first in Latin America – will cost approximately one million dollars, provided by the Chilean Economic Development Agency (Corfo) along with private investors. The project will allow Chile to fulfill the highest food safety standards demanded by developed countries.

The registry will help scientists study genetic changes resulting from climate change or overfishing. In addition, if species become depleted in particular areas, it will allow their repopulation with genetically similar individuals.

CHILEANS AROUND THE WORLD

Students at the Necedal School in La Pintana, Santiago, won first place in the Innovative Solution award category at the FIRST Lego League world festival in Atlanta, Georgia, featuring robotics projects by 18,000 participating students from around the world. The team, called "Spectrum Bots," invented an automated irrigation system using solar energy.



Jazz musician Claudia Acuña presented a series of performances at Lincoln Center in New York, where she will soon launch a new album dedicated to Chile. It includes songs such as "El cigarrito," "Te recuerdo Amanda," and "El derecho de vivir en paz," by Víctor Jara.

Sailors Felipe Cubillos and José Muñoz became Chile's first competitors in history to round Cape Horn in the third stage of the round-the-world "Portimao Global Ocean Race," which began in October 2008 in Portugal.



AGENDA

- ★ **May 14-16:** 2009 Global Women's Summit. Santiago.
- ★ **May 25-27:** State Visit to the Netherlands.
- ★ **May 27-31:** Official Visit to France.
- ★ **May 30:** President Bachelet attends the presidential inauguration in El Salvador. San Salvador.
- ★ **June 23:** President Bachelet meets with President Barack Obama. Washington.

Naturally beautiful

Extraordinary, unique places, true marvels of nature untouched by human beings and offering great potential for domestic and international tourism — these were the criteria used by a team of professors at the Universidad Austral of Chile in their quest to identify the Natural Wonders of the country's southern zone.

Twenty-five candidate sites were chosen, and seven finalists were selected with the input of academics and experts in tourism and natural heritage, as well as an Internet poll with over 7,000 participants. The highest number of votes went to Torres del Paine National Park, in the Magallanes Region. A World Biosphere Reserve since 1958, the park includes 242 hectares of mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes and glaciers. Another top finalist was Laguna San Rafael, in the Aysén Region, a glacial lake near the Campos de Hielo Norte ice fields.



Torres del Paine National Park



The Marble Cathedral

Other honored landmarks in the same region include the spectacular "Marble Cathedral" of General Carrera Lake, a mineral formation formed through the erosion of lakeside cliffs. Featuring uniquely beautiful shapes and colors, the site can be toured in small boats. Campos de Hielo Sur, the world's third largest extension of ice, covers 16,000 square kilometers in the Patagonian Andes, of which 14,000 are in Chile. The Baker River,

the second largest in South America with a length of 370 kilometers, is a favorite for salmon fishing.

Additional finalists were Todos los Santos Lake and the Petrohué Waterfalls, in Los Lagos Region. The lake's striking turquoise waters contrast with the nearby Osorno, Puntagudo and Tronador volcanoes, which are capped with snow most of the year, and the surging force of the waterfalls is an unforgettable spectacle.



Todos los Santos Lake



The Valdivian forest

Another Natural Wonder lies farther north, in Los Ríos Region: the Valdivian temperate rain forest, an ecosystem with dense stands of evergreens and an abundant variety of endemic species. Among its notable flora are hazelnut trees, various species of cypress, and the copihue, Chile's national flower.

TRAVELS IN CHILE

In the footsteps of Charles Darwin



More than a scientist, Charles Darwin was an explorer at heart. After withdrawing from his medical studies and thinking about joining a religious order, he decided to embark on the British sailing ship *Beagle* to travel the world and explore Chile for a year.



In his journal, he recorded his impressions of the flora, fauna and people of this nascent and unexplored country. Above all, he collected information for his scientific studies, later condensed in the book *The Voyage of the Beagle*. This year is the 200th anniversary of his birth, and November will mark 150 years since he presented his theory of the evolution of species.

“We anchored in the fine bay of Port Famine. It was now the beginning of winter, and I never saw a more cheerless prospect; the dusky woods, piebald with snow, could be

only seen indistinctly, through a drizzling hazy atmosphere.” Thus he related his arrival at the Strait of Magellan, in July 1834. He encountered the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, whom he later called “savages,” reporting that they “shook their cloaks” in a strange manner at the travelers.

Arriving at the island of Chiloé, he noted that the humid climate and “impenetrable” forest posed obstacles to cultivating the fruits of southern Europe, and called the church at Castro “picturesque.” From the island, he first glimpsed the Osorno volcano, recording that “this most beautiful mountain, formed like a perfect cone, and white with snow, stands out in front of the Cordillera.” He witnessed an eruption, describing the experience as follows: “The light was sufficient to cast on the water a long bright reflection. Large masses of molten matter seem very commonly to be cast out of the craters in this part of the Cordillera.”



This was not the only surprise nature had in store for him: during his stay in Valdivia, Los Ríos Region, he experienced the most powerful earthquake he had felt up to that time: “It came on suddenly, and lasted two minutes, but the time appeared much longer. (...) There was no difficulty in standing upright, but the motion made me almost giddy,” he reported. In

Talcahuano, in the Bío Bío Region, he observed the damage resulting from the event.



More pleasant recollections arose from his travels through central Chile. In Valparaíso, the climate appeared “delicious — the atmosphere so dry, and the heavens so clear and blue with the sun shining brightly.” In Santiago, he climbed Santa Lucía Hill, which he called an “inexhaustible source of pleasure, with a surprising and peculiar view.” He also visited Quillota, La Campana Hill, San Fernando and Rancagua, where the cordillera itself became the protagonist of his report. “Who can avoid wondering at the force which has upheaved these mountains, and even more so at the countless ages which it must have required to have broken through, removed, and levelled whole masses of them?” In May 1835, he ended his journey in the north of the country, where he witnessed a rainfall that caused the desert to burst into bloom.

The impact of Darwin’s visit to Chile is reflected in the organisms and places that still bear his name today. These include two endangered species: Darwin’s fox — a denizen of the Nahuelbuta mountains and the forests of Chiloé – and Darwin’s frog, a small, bright green amphibian found in southern Chile. Other namesakes are the Darwin Cordillera, in Tierra del Fuego, and Darwin’s barberry (*Berberis darwinii*), which resembles the calafate bush.



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