

**SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHILE,  
MICHELLE BACHELET JERIA,  
DURING THE FIRST STONE CEREMONY FOR  
THE LARGE SYNOPTIC SURVEY TELESCOPE  
OF THE AURA OBSERVATORY**

*(Unofficial translation based on the text of the speech  
as provided by the Press Department of the Government of Chile)*

Vicuña, April 14th, 2015

Dear Friends:

First of all, thank you for inviting me to this ceremony, in which the installation of the LSST, which will be integrated into the network of AURA, begins to be realized.

This is a highly anticipated project by the international and national scientific communities, as it will allow us, as has been commented here, to take a giant step for research in astronomy.

To gauge the magnitude of change, it is sufficient to note that during its first month of operation, the capacity of the LSST will exceed what all previous telescopes, in combination, can observe.

This telescope, as has been described here, of over 8 meters in diameter, with this digital camera capable of taking pictures of 3 billion pixels, will be able to explore the sky weekly, to identify – as commented here – supernovae, asteroids near our planet, and to map the cosmos in 3D. That is, it will bring us closer to the mysteries of the cosmos than ever before.

It seems to me that the technological leap will be revolutionary. The information delivered by this telescope will undoubtedly open new fields of research, new questions that will be answered by researchers from around the world for years to come.

**So I am here, what can I say, so proud as President of Chile, that here, from Cerro Pachón, in the district of Vicuña, we are working for the next decade of world science. With this foundation stone, today we are setting in motion the history of astronomy, the future history of astronomy.**

From this land, new opportunities for exchange will open, of meeting between nationalities, giving priority to what we have in common: an insatiable hunger for understanding our universe. Because the grand beauty of science is that it has no borders and that together we can contribute to the shared knowledge.

And in this subject, Chile has been an actor of global significance for decades. In fact, the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA) began operations in our country in 1961 – as Dr. Córdova reminded us – with the installation of the first major international observatory in Cerro Tololo.

**Over time, other projects have been added, each time more modern, that have given Chile this leadership position of which Ambassador Hammer spoke. When I read, as I was preparing myself for this, I was surprised that by 2020 our country will be the focal point of over 70% of all of the world's astronomical infrastructure – and I'm very proud of that. And in these lands will be installed the most powerful telescopes ever built, with an investment close to 6 billion USD.**

And the reasons for which Chile is becoming the world center for astronomical observation is that, modestly, we have the best skies in the southern hemisphere. Few countries offer the opportunity to count on a natural laboratory as exceptional as northern Chile: extremely clear skies due to a unique climate, atmospheric stability, and minimal environmental and light pollution.

It is good to remember it and value it, because sometimes we tend to forget how privileged we are with our geography, our natural diversity, with the contrasts that this generous land has.

Yes, because as well as many natural disasters – and I want to thank you, Ambassador, for mentioning what President Obama said publicly

at the Summit of the Americas and as he also told my ambassador, that the United States is available for further support in everything necessary – we also have these other wonders that give us a set of opportunities.

Of course this has to be accompanied by a vision of the State and institutional responsibility of both government agencies as well as universities.

As a country, we have shown a special concern for the preservation of the sky as a resource of our country. In order that the use of lighting be compatible with our astronomical vocation, we have issued the regulation "Decree for the Regulation of Light Pollution", which entered into force in May of last year, but finally, since early March this year, counts on the protocol and the regulation necessary for implementation in the regions of Antofagasta, Atacama and Coquimbo. Furthermore, we are promoting the establishment of the sites of astronomical observations as World Heritage.

We have also sought that international projects of this kind serve to project our science in international networks, and Ambassador Hammer referred to this. And this has provided, among other things, that researchers from national institutions have access to 10% of the time on the instrumentation installed, or as in the case of the LSST, that there be a substantial participation in the access to the data and the collaborations. This is a model that has worked and one to which we will continue to give priority, because we believe that working collectively, as AURA does, is the best way of doing science.

But we also know that there are still challenges in which we must continue advancing.

On the one hand, projects of this magnitude should help more effectively to promote the development of applied research and technology in other productive sectors, and Ambassador mentioned several of them. And that is a task in which we are working through CORFO and CONICYT.

On the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen the links between science and citizenship. And this is a particular hallmark of this

project that is worth highlighting – as everyone has said, but I'll repeat it in case anyone forgot: the images that the LSST generates will be available to teachers, students and public in general. And we are talking about a material of great value, which will be at the service of education and which will help to create this scientific culture.

It depends on us to be able to take full advantage of a project with wealth of LSST, and that we put it at the service of development in a broad sense: harmonious, environmentally friendly, and built from knowledge and openness.

Chile will remain a partner in initiatives of this kind, in which we take advantage the full potential of cooperation we have with the United States, as well as the global cooperation we have, in which we continue to favor the formation of new generations of young scientists, and in which we put all of the wonders of scientific discovery in the hands of everyone.

Thank you very much.