

Declaraciones a la prensa Australia en Clausura de seminario minero
DISCURSO DEL PRESIDENTE DE LA REPÚBLICA EN CLAUSURA DE
SEMINARIO MINERO, EN CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

Dear friends,

Let me first thank you for this warm welcome here in Canberra. It is an honor and a pleasure to be here, and to have an opportunity to meet with you and hold a discussion, to become familiar with this multicultural society here in Australia.

Needless to say, Chile and Australia have something in common, not only because of their being along the Pacific Ocean, but also because we used to be considered countries that were "far away" from the "centers" of the world. Whenever you saw a map of the world, Australia and Chile were often in the corners; sometimes they didn't even fit. We're accustomed to that. You are a huge continent, but a huge island at the same time. And even though Chile is not an island, we used to think of ourselves as one, since we are surrounded by the Andes Mountains to the east, the desert to the north, Antarctica to the south and a big, big ocean to the west. So we were raised in a world very similar to the one in which you were raised. Because of world events in the 19th century, some people immigrated here, and some immigrated to Chile. Even though technology at the time was very different from that of today, it was possible to have that kind of movement and contact.

In today's world, we have a different challenge. The center of the world after the Second World War was in Europe, the Mediterranean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, which was where most of the growth in world trade was taking place. You were far away from that, and we were too. But suddenly, the currents of history changed. Suddenly, the Pacific Ocean became an increasingly important area where most of the growth in world trade was taking place. For the first time, Australia and Chile had a front-row view of where history was taking place. This is rather unusual for countries that are so far away, but we have discovered that it is here, around this ocean, where most of the development in the 21st century is going to take place. This is why I came here with a delegation of government and business leaders in order to raise the ambition level of our relations.

If the level of our bilateral relations increases, how much can we increase our own standing in today's world? More and more, the Pacific Ocean has become a place of bridges rather than distances among different countries. And our own goal is for Chile to be a platform for the countries on the other side of the ocean to do business with other Latin American countries. This is why we're investing in telecommunications, infrastructure, ports and airports. Now there are four flights a week between New Zealand and Australia and Chile.

I wanted to come here and thank the business community of Australia, that is betting on the future of Chile. I also wanted to say thanks for the way you received so many Chileans during the 70s and 80s who came here in search of a new future. More than 45,000 Chileans now live in Australia. It's part of our history. How are so many Chileans living abroad going to change Chile? In today's amendments to the Constitution, the matter of nationality was addressed. It makes dual citizenship possible for Chileans living abroad but trying to maintain ties with Chile.

This is why I am extremely happy about the way that the Prime Minister and I were able, in our discussion, to come to a double-taxation agreement. We are going to defend our fisheries here in the Pacific Ocean to protect endangered species, in collaboration with New Zealand and others. This is why we have been able to increase our bilateral relations for quite some time.

Just as you mentioned, Australia and Chile have similar views about the next Doha Development Round. Will the next round of negotiations, set for December in Hong Kong, succeed? Can our representatives then work in such a way that all of us can benefit from an increasingly globalized world? We would, at the same time, like that world to have fair rules, not only in trade, but in other areas as well. This is why we agree on so much at the multilateral level. We were discussing whether the time had come to adapt the UN Charter to the political and economic realities of the 21st century, rather than the post-World War II realities of 1945. It is a difficult, tremendous challenge, but I'm sure that just as you have been able to construct the beautiful continent-country that is Australia, we are also going to be able to make an effort to create a better world for everybody. This is also why we agree on so much in the APEC regional forum, one of the world's most important regional-level forums. This is why we look forward to the kind of leadership Australia can provide in 2007 for the next APEC meeting.

Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, allow me to thank you for the kind words you have said about my country. Reestablishing democracy in Chile has been a long road, discovering the need for some kind of mutual understanding between government and opposition. In this civilized world, the only way we have to keep our democracy alive is to create further social policies in our country, to allow the benefits of growth—the growth rate of which we are so proud—to go to public policies, healthcare, education, housing and infrastructure for the Chilean people. In the long run, democracy is tied to our ability to ensure that the benefits of growth will reach all regions and sectors of our society. That is why I am so happy to be here today. I think that the transition in Chile to democracy is finally finished, with the changes to our Constitution approved today by the Chilean Congress.

It's probably a good coincidence that I can say here today that the agreement we have in Chile resembles, to some extent, the agreement that you have reached in your own country in this multicultural society.

Thank you very much to all of you for this warm welcome.

DECLARACIONES A LA PRENSA

Pregunta: Resultados de encuesta CEP.

S.E.: Creo que siempre es gratificante tomar nota de aquello. Ahora, hay que entender que para ser acreedor de eso hay que trabajar con mayor fuerza, con mayor encomio y con mayor entusiasmo. Es lo que estamos haciendo acá en esta reunión con hombres de negocios, para invitarlos a trabajar conjuntamente en el área minera, y lo que haremos luego con más de 400 empresarios en Sydney, en Australia.

Y también quisiera señalar que, junto con ello, hay que entender también que es la foto del momento. Y, por lo tanto, para mantenerse hay que seguir trabajando con mucha fuerza.

Pregunta: ¿Y el procesamiento de Matías de la Fuente no influye en la imagen?

S.E.: Creo que debemos dejar, como siempre les he dicho a ustedes, que la justicia haga su trabajo, no sacar conclusiones inmediatas, porque queda todavía un largo proceso por delante. Y sólo quisiera decir que Matías de la Fuente ha sido un gran colaborador y un profesional muy destacado.