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SPEECH BY H.E THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, MICHELLE BACHELET JERIA, DURING THE FOUNDATION STONE CEREMONY FOR LSST INSTALLATION

Vicuña, April 14th, 2015

Dear Friends:

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

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

To gauge the magnitude of change, just we must know that during its first month of operation, the capacity of the LSST will exceed what all previous telescopes, in combination, can observe.

This telescope, which has been described here, with over 8 meters in diameter, with this digital camera capable to take pictures of 3 billion of pixels, will be able to explore the sky weekly; to identify –It has said here- supernovae, asteroids near our planet and to map the cosmos in 3D. That is, put closer us its mysteries as never before done.

I think the technological leap will be revolutionary. The information that will be delivered by this telescope will undoubtedly open new fields of research, new questions that will be answered by researchers around the world for years.

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





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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, in order to privilege what we have in common: an endless interest for understanding our universe. Because the beauty of science is that it has no borders and that altogether we can add to common knowledge.

And regarding this, 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 -PhD. Córdova reminded about it- whereupon the first major international observatory was installed in the Cerro Tololo.

Over time, other projects have been joined, every time much modern, which have given to Chile this leadership position which Ambassador Hammer spoke us. I mean, when I read, when I was preparing myself for this, I was surprised that by 2020 our country will focus over 70% of the world's astronomical infrastructure-and I'm very proud of that. And in these lands, the ever installed more powerful telescopes will be installed, with an investment close to USD 6 trillion.

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 have a natural laboratory as exceptional as northern Chile: Extremely clear skies due to a unique climate, atmospheric stability, and low environmental and light pollution.

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





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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 state and institutional responsibility of both government agencies and universities.

As a country, we have shown a special concern for the preservation of the sky as a resource of our country. Because for that the use of lighting to be compatible with our astronomical vocation, we have issued the standard "Issue for Regulation of Light Pollution", which entered into force in May last year, but finally, from early March this year, count on the protocol and the regulation needed for implementation in the regions of Antofagasta, Atacama and Coquimbo. But we are also promoting the establishment of astronomical observation sites as World Heritage.

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

But we also know that there are still challenges in which we must go further.

On the one hand, projects of this magnitude should help more effectively to promote the development of applied research and





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technology research 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 identify the links between science and citizenship. And this is a particular stamp on this project which worth highlighting -and what everyone has said, but I'll repeat it in case anyone forgot: the images you generate the LSST 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 it will help to create this scientific culture.

It will depend of 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 the knowledge and openness.

Chile will remain a partner in initiatives of this kind, where we take advantage the full potential of cooperation we have with the United States, also the global cooperation we have, where it's still continue favoring the formation of new generations of young scientists and where all the wonders of scientific discovery be available for everyone.

Thank you very much.

Translation by Luis E. Fernández Sáez

