

**TOAST REMARKS AT THE CELEBRATION OF  
THE NATIONAL DAY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHILE  
18 SEPTEMBER 2007**

H.E. Ambassador Claudio Herrera, distinguished Ambassador of the Republic of Chile in South Africa,

Honoured Guests,

Colleagues,

Friends,

Chile's National Day celebrates the day on which a young Chile formed its first independent government on 18 September 1810, nearly 200 years ago.

I am informed that in Chile today the celebrations entail that the flag is hoisted in front of each house, or draped over the balcony, and that little Chilean flags are put on cars. Many ordinary citizens dress up in their national dress, drink a toast with cider called "chicha" and perform a characteristic traditional dance. It is, for all Chileans, a special day indeed, and a cause for genuine and enthusiastic celebration by all that country's citizens. For this reason I am indeed pleased to see many South African dignitaries and friends here to celebrate this day with you, Mr Ambassador, their very presence being indicative of the warm and friendly relations which exist between South Africa and Chile.

Your Excellency,

It is a pleasure for me to be here today to represent the South African people and the South African Government at the celebration of Chile's National Day and to extend our heartiest congratulations through Ambassador Herrera, to President Michelle Bachelet and to the Government and people of Chile. We would also ask that Ambassador Herrera convey warm greetings to Foreign Minister Alejandro Foxley, and also to Minister Clarisa Hardy, Chile's Minister of Planning and Cooperation, who has just visited South Africa to

participate in workshops on poverty reduction, hosted by Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and with the participation of our First Lady, Mrs Zanele Mbeki, who herself visited Chile last year to investigate models of poverty reduction.

Chile has made remarkable strides in overcoming poverty, achieving high and sustainable economic growth, and bringing the benefits to its people. These are key objectives for South Africa as well, and accordingly I could not think of a better occasion than Chile's National Day celebration to pay tribute to the cooperation which exists in so many fields between our two countries.

This contact and cooperation has taken place from the highest offices. We recall, for example, that President Mbeki held his first bilateral meetings with President Bachelet during his attendance of the Chilean Presidential Inauguration in March 2006. Our respective Heads of State were able to meet again during a brief stopover by the Chilean President in Cape Town last November; and we are very much looking forward to receiving President Bachelet on a State Visit to South Africa at a date in the not-too-distant future. Incidentally, it is also worth noting that of the twenty-one Ministers in President Bachelet's Cabinet, ten are women.

President Bachelet's progressive governance style is followed with great interest from South Africa. Good bilateral relations are further boosted by a common commitment to South-South relations and a shared view of Africa's future as a conflict-free continent that promotes the prosperity of her people

Our mutual solidarity goes back a long way. Our struggle for freedom and democracy has largely been won. Now we are opening a new chapter in our relations. It would be a more than a fair statement to say that the relationship between South Africa and Chile are closer today than it has ever been in the history of two countries. This has come about not only because we currently have in place two Governments of similar political persuasion, but also because of the potential that clearly exists for both countries to contribute to, and compliment, one another's development. The breadth of the

relationship and the potential that exists has made, and is making, a reality of the often repeated statement that Chile is a very important western neighbour for South Africa.

Like South Africa and some of our close neighbours in this region, the economy of Chile was for some time dominated by mining and agriculture. But like us, Chile has sought to diversify its economy and in the process, opportunities have opened up between our respective countries, with our becoming investors in each others' industries, exchanging technologies, and cooperating in innovation. There is a growing dynamism about these trends that alerts us to our responsibilities to encourage and broaden the range of activities in which our companies and people are already involved.

As a consequence and especially in view of the significant accomplishments that have been achieved in our bilateral relationship since we were last able to celebrate Chile's National Day in South Africa, I would like to:

- Firstly, extend our congratulations to Ambassador Herrera and his team at the Chilean Embassy on the successes that they have worked for and achieved over the last year in expanding the excellent relations that have been developed, and continue to develop, between our two countries; and
- again to extend our sincere congratulations to the President, Government and people of the republic of Chile, and to Ambassador Herrera and his Embassy team in South Africa, on the occasion of their National Day.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now ask you all to join me in a toast to the President, Government and people of the Republic of Chile.

“Salud!”

Thank you.