

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009*

**Remarks Following a Meeting With President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile and an Exchange With Reporters**

*June 23, 2009*

*President Obama.* Well, I want to thank President Bachelet for taking the time to visit with me today. We had a chance to get to know each other at the Summit of the Americas, and we've spoken on the phone repeatedly. I find her one of the most compelling leaders that we have, not just in the hemisphere but around the world. And I congratulate her and her entire team for managing the Chilean economy and the political process in Chile in such an excellent fashion, and I think she's doing an outstanding job.

Obviously, the friendship between the United States and Chile is strong. We have very strong commercial ties, in part because of the free trade agreement that exists between Chile and the United States. One of the things that we've discussed here is how we can continually deepen that relationship. So we are announcing cooperative projects on clean energy. There is enormous interest both in the United States and in Chile in how we can develop solar power and wind power and biofuels and a whole host of other clean energy strategies that will make the people of both countries more prosperous and less dependent on imported energy needs. So we are going to be starting a cooperative project in Chile on this issue.

In addition, we think that there is tremendous possibilities for cooperation on science and technology and—so a specific project that we've discussed is a cancer research center that can help us make progress on that deadly disease.

More broadly, I look to President Bachelet for good advice and good counsel in terms of how the United States can continue to build a strong relationship with all of Latin America. And I think the good progress that we began to make at the Summit of the Americas can be built on with some very concrete steps in the months and years to come. We consider Chile to be one of our most important partners in that process. And so I expect that in the months to come we'll be working very closely together.

The last point I would make is—and I mentioned this, actually, at my press conference with the White House correspondents—I think Chile is to be congratulated on having managed their economy and their fiscal surpluses during good times in such a way that they are now—have now been able to manage the bad times in a good way. And I think that it's an example for all of us that good fiscal policy, good economic policy, ultimately, allows for prosperity through good times and bad times.

And I think that as we move forward in some of the global discussions around how to respond to the deep recession that the world is going through, that we look to countries like Chile to underscore the fact that no matter how big or small the country is, good economic policies can help grow the economy throughout the world.

So we're very grateful to you for your visit, we're glad that you're going to be here for a couple of days, and I look forward to returning the favor by visiting Chile sometime soon.

*President Bachelet.* Thank you very much, President Obama. As you say, we have had a wonderful conversation and it is because we feel that we are so close to the way President Obama's administration is understanding the world, its challenges, and how to build relations with—*[inaudible]*—with the countries of Latin America.

Of course, he is an idol in our country. I mean, everybody was so enthusiastic about this meeting. And so—and that is because of real reasons, because we understand that the way you are developing your leadership is one who inspire us and makes us feel very comfortable and very confident too.

And we have congratulated President Obama because of all its foreign policy, all of its efforts to not only nationally but also internationally have a good response to the economic crisis. We have been exchanging point of view on how we can also be part of the solution in the Latin American region to cope with—to respond to this economic crisis, how to assure that the countries of Latin America can have the capitals—the flows of capital that they need in order to recover the economy, and be able to tackle challenges like poverty, like health problems, and educational problems, and so on.

And of course, he already mentioned that we have been signing today, earlier today, this cooperation and a memoranda through energy, and we are really enthusiastic about clean energy as we share the idea that the crisis should be responded—also trying to tackle with climate change issues. And green—clean energy will be a very important, I would say, a support in this direction. Chile has great conditions for solar energy and some others, so we are really enthusiastic about these common efforts.

We will continue, also, with other initiatives like Chile-California plan, like equal opportunities plan where lots of Chileans have come into United States to make master degrees, postgraduate studies to help with Chile's development. And also, Chile is willing to be a very good partner of the United States in this cooperation within the region so we can have a closer relation with the United States and all the Latin American countries.

And, well, we're also are working on health in cancer, but also, we have been working with the people—with the CDC regarding the human flu, and I think it will be very important also for the United States, because when—in autumn, there will be another—probably another wave of human flu. Whatever is learned from Chile, we have good, good diagnostic capacities, good registration capacity, will be upheld for future treatments here in the United States, for vaccine use and so on.

*President Obama.* And since the President is a doctor, you can take her word for it. That's very helpful.

All right, guys. Thank you, guys. Thank you very much.

Q. Just two questions, Mr. President——

*Press Office Assistant Benjamin N. Finkenbinder.* Thank you, guys. This way——

*President Obama.* All right. You know what? Actually, Ben, I'm going to make an exception.

Q. From the Chilean press, please?

*The President.* We'll get one question from the Chilean press. How's that?

*Chile-U.S. Relations/U.S. Foreign Policy*

Q. Wonderful.

*The President.* Go ahead.

Q. Mr. President, yes, I'd like to ask you, I realize that your agenda is moving forward. But, inevitably, I'd like to ask you, President Bachelet, in a previous trip to United States, made

echo of an old joke: "There's never been a coup d'etat in the United States, because there's no American embassy." The point being that almost——

*President Bachelet.* That was a joke from an American guy. [*Laughter*] I just said it was a good joke.

*President Obama.* Yes, it is. [*Laughter*]

Q. The point being that almost no Latin American nation has been free from CIA—bloody CIA intervention, Chile being a prime example, President Bachelet being one of its victims. Is it time for a historical apology?

*President Obama.* Well, look, I think you answered your own question right at the beginning, which is, I'm interested in going forward, not looking backward. I think that the United States has been an enormous force for good in the world. I think there have been times where we've made mistakes. But I think that what is important is looking at what our policies are today and what my administration intends to do in cooperating with the region.

And I was very clear in Trinidad and Tobago at the Summit of the Americas that we are interested in a partnership in which we are focused on, how can we improve the day-to-day living standards of ordinary people? And that that focus on human development is one that transcends boundaries, should transcend ideologies. I don't have a litmus test in terms of, you know, whether a government is center-right, center-left, this or that. My approach is, if the United States is working together with a country to promote the well-being, the health, the education, the economic opportunities of people in both countries, then we're going to have a good relationship. And I'm confident that we are moving in that direction, and I think that Chile is going to be an excellent partner in that process.

As President Bachelet mentioned—you know, I think this—the flu situation is a good example of what the 21st century is going to look like. There are no borders on the flu. This is not an American problem or a Mexican problem or a Chilean problem; this is a world problem. And given that the flu season is happening now in the Southern Hemisphere, if we get good information and we're both assisting countries in the Southern Hemisphere, but also learning from the data that is being generated, that will then help the people of the United States. And it's a good metaphor, I think, for a whole range of issues, from climate change to poverty to terrorism, whatever the issue. So many of these issues now cross borders. We can't look at them in isolation, and that, I think, is going to be the basis for a strong working relationship in the future.

So, thank you.

*President's Visit to Chile*

Q. Last question. There is—there is in Latin America clearly——

Q. When are you coming to Chile?

*President Obama.* Sorry, everybody is——

Q. When are you coming to Chile? When are you——

*President Obama.* I'm looking forward to coming soon.

*Chilean Press Corps*

Q. President Obama, can you take a photograph with the Chilean press, please?

*President Obama.* A photograph with the press?

Q. Yes.

Q. Yes.

*President Obama.* Okay. Why don't we go outside?

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:22 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

*Categories:* Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Chile, President Bachelet Jeria.

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