

Viewing cable 08SANTIAGO1030, CHILE MEDIA REPORT - NOVEMBER 22-24

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SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT - NOVEMBER 22-24

Headline Stories

1. At the APEC Summit in Lima, President Bachelet called on the private sector to forge alliances with the public sector to protect employment and prevent massive layoffs. The President will travel to Cuba in February to open the Havana International Book Fair and meet with Fidel Castro; The Christian Democratic party argues Bachelet must also meet with the opposition.

U.S.-related News

2. Foreign Affairs Minister Alejandro Foxley and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met briefly during APEC. Reportedly, they talked about U.S. accession to the P4 (Trans-Pacific Partnership) and the December 10 Pacific Rim (Pathways to Prosperity) Ministerial in Panama. The Pacific Rim encompasses countries that have signed FTAs

with the United States and therefore is viewed as a bloc that counters far-left governments in the region (La Tercera, conservative, independent, Sun. circ. 222,084, 11/23).

¶3. Foreign Affairs Minister Foxley was asked about the region's reaction to Obama's election and he said: "It was well received and there is significant expectation that he will renew dialogue and resolve conflicts. Latin America... is asking (the United States) to take its participation in the P4 seriously and to continue with its integration and projection in the Asia-Pacific....

It's hard to find an international leader as open to dialogue, who represents diversity, and who promotes understanding as strongly (as Obama)," said Foxley. He said this will make it harder for some countries to "to attack the empire," adding that Obama "will be highly respected by an array of countries and social strata" (La Tercera, circ. 101,000, 11/24).

¶4. Chile's APEC delegation said President Bachelet was responsible for including the P4 on the summit's agenda, noting this is a "diplomatic victory." In his remarks, President Bush talked about the U.S. negotiations to join the P4 as an example of his administration's defense of free trade and as a tool for global economic development (El Mercurio, Sun. circ. 260,108, 11/23).

¶5. U.S. company Monsanto bought 180 hectares in the VI Region for US\$6 million to produce seeds, soy, and canola. McDonalds went ahead with its expansion plan in Chile and will open 10 new restaurants by 2011, increasing its operations by 15% (El Mercurio, circ. 129,000, 11/24).

Cuba

¶6. Bachelet will visit Cuba in February of 2009 to inaugurate the Havana Book Fair and meet with Fidel Castro. Bachelet has privately said that Chile is "indebted" to Cuba, because Castro welcomed military-regime era political exiles, who include several of her friends. The trip would make Bachelet the first Chilean president to visit the island since the onset of democracy in 1990, and the first in 37 years. But the trip will have political costs. The DC party said that as the representative "of all Chileans," Bachelet must also meet with the opposition. DC President Jorge Burgos said the President also should make special gestures, such as including in her delegation Patricio Walter and Exequiel Silva. Both have been repeatedly denied visas to Cuba because of their active role in the defense of political rights on the island.

¶7. Chile and Cuba have had full diplomatic ties since 1995, but these have been strained over Chile's vote in the UNHRC and Havana's acknowledgment that it gave refuge to several Chilean terrorists who fled a high security prison. The trip is also a reflection of the differences in foreign policy between Bachelet and the Foreign Ministry, which is not organizing the trip to Havana. While Foreign Minister has given priority to ties with the United States and the Pacific Axis, Bachelet has prioritized the strengthening of ties with Latin American countries through regional entities such as UNASUR (La Tercera, circ. 101,000, 11/23 and 11/24).

Nuclear Energy

¶8. Finland wants to invest in nuclear energy in Chile. Finnish Ambassador Ivo Salmi said his country can contribute by sharing the appropriate regulatory framework to develop nuclear energy and providing training for nuclear reactor management. Finland has the right credentials in this regard. It's one of the countries with the lowest levels of CO2 emissions in the world and is developing the most advanced reactors today (La Tercera, Sun. circ. 222,084, 11/23).

Education

¶9. A 2008 Institute for International Education (IIE) survey shows that Chile is among the 20 preferred destinations for U.S. college students. U.S. Cultural Attach Michael Orlansky said, "There is much interest in learning Spanish and in learning more about Chile's economy, history, and politics. Plus, it's a fairly safe place with an array of accommodations available for students (La Tercera, circ. 101,000, 11/24).

¶10. University Alberto Hurtado and Georgetown University signed an undergraduate and graduate cooperation agreement that includes student and teacher exchange programs and technical assistance (El Mercurio, circ. 129,000, 11/24).

Local Politics

¶11. RN Presidential candidate Sebastian Pinera is trying to win over the environmentalists with whom he will inevitably clash over the HydroAysen dam project. In this context, Pinera is working with environmental NGOs on the promotion of non-conventional renewable energy initiatives. He also organized a seminar with Christopher Paine from the Nature Resource Defense Council to discuss Barack Obama's environmental proposals (La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent, Sun. circ. 16,200).

Press

¶12. La Tercera and CNN Chile signed a strategic alliance accord that will allow both organizations to share news stories, editorial commentary and an array of press products (La Tercera, Sat. circ. 195,626, 11/22).

Surveys

¶13. A survey in La Tercera shows that RN presidential candidate Sebastian Pinera is ahead the presidential race. To the question, "if the election were this Sunday, who would you vote for?" 38% said Piera, 12% Ricardo Lagos, 4% Eduardo Frei, and 3% Jose Miguel Insulza. According to the survey, in a runoff election with Insulza, Pinera would receive 54% and Insulza 32%; in a runoff with Lagos, Pinera would obtain 52% and Lagos 35%; in a Pinera versus Frei contest, Pinera would earn 53% and Frei 33% of the vote (La Tercera, Sat. 11/22).

Editorials

¶14. Defense journalist Raul Sohr wrote: "One of the most difficult issues that President Obama will face is Iran. Many of his advisors are advocates of reinitiating a dialogue with Teheran. But with or without dialogue, Washington must make sure that Iran

will effectively abandon its plan to build nuclear weapons" (La Nacion, 11/24).

¶15. "Medvedev's Business and Naval Maneuvers": "Many see Russia's interest in strengthening ties with Latin America as a direct challenge of the historical U.S. influence in the region.... The most controversial issue for the United States will be the presence of Russian President Medvedev during naval exercise headed by Russia's nuclear cruiser, Peter the Great, with the Venezuelan navy. The exercise is a provocation, since the Russian vessels will stay in the Caribbean, which is an area that Washington considers as its area of influence. It's possible that Obama's arrival at the White House will lower the tension between the two former rivals of the Cold War, and that Medvedev will have to start a different type of relationship with the new U.S. President. And in that relationship, the issue of Latin America will take a take a different course" (El Mercurio, circ. 129,000, 11/24).

SIMONS