

Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Chile and ESO for Establishing a New Centre for Observation in Chile – ALMA

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On October 21, 2002, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Chile, Mrs. María Soledad Alvear, and the ESO Director General, Dr. Catherine Cesarsky, signed an Agreement that authorizes ESO to establish a new centre for astronomical observation in Chile.

This new centre for astronomical observation will be for the Atacama Large Millimeter Array (ALMA), the largest ground-based astronomical project for the next decades.

On this occasion, Minister Alvear stated that “we want to have ALMA working as soon as possible, which will constitute a pride not only to Chilean scientists but for the whole country and in particular, for the community of the Antofagasta Region”.

ESO Director General Cesarsky said that “signing this agreement between the Government of Chile and ESO is a historical step in the astronomical



Signing of the new Agreement that authorizes ESO to establish a new centre for astronomical observation in Chile. General view.

collaboration between Chile and ESO and it will allow Chile to host, once again, a project of worldwide interest and impact”.

ALMA is a joint project on equal basis between ESO and AUI (Associated Universities, Inc.). These organizations represent the scientific interests of Europe on one side and the United States with Canada on the other side. Chilean astronomers are closely involved with the

project, and 10 % of the observing time will be reserved for Chilean science.

ALMA will be built in the Andes, on the Plateau of Chajnantor, 5000 metres above sea level and 60 km east of the town of San Pedro de Atacama. The array will be comprised of 64 antennas with unprecedented sensitivity and angular resolution that will allow studying the origin of galaxies, stars and planets, opening new horizons for astronomy, and being able to observe galaxies across the universe where stars are being formed.

The agreement now signed between ESO and the Government of the Republic of Chile recognizes the interest that the ALMA Project has for Chile, as it will deepen and strengthen cooperation in scientific and technological matters between the parties.



Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Chile, Mrs. María Soledad Alvear (seated, right) and the ESO Director General, Dr. Catherine Cesarsky (seated, left).

Eighty Nights Up a Mountain

By SARA ELLISON



For the last two years, I have worked as a fellow at the Santiago offices of the European Southern Observatory (ESO) with support responsibilities at the Very

Large Telescope (VLT) on Cerro Paranal in the north of Chile. This is es-

A version of this article first appeared in August 2002 in the online publication Next Wave (www.nextwave.org), published by Science Magazine on the occasion of the UK joining ESO.

As Sara Ellison describes, she has been a Paranal Fellow for the past two years and is currently in her third year at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago.

entially a postdoctoral position; I started here directly after I completed my

PhD at the University of Cambridge in the summer of 2000.