



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



Celebrating 50 years of reaching new heights in astronomy

The year 2012 marks the 50th anniversary of the European Southern Observatory (ESO), the foremost intergovernmental astronomy organisation in the world.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



21 June 1953

A shared European Observatory is discussed for the first time by a group of astronomers at Leiden, the Netherlands.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

GESCHEHEN zu PARIS am 5. Oktober 1962

in einer Urschrift in deutscher, französischer, niederländischer und schwedischer Sprache; bei textlichen Unstimmigkeiten ist der französische Wortlaut maßgebend. Die Urschrift wird im Archiv des Ministeriums für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der Französischen Republik hinterlegt.

Dieses Ministerium übermittelt den Staaten, die dieses Übereinkommen unterzeichnet haben oder ihm beigetreten sind, eine beglaubigte Abschrift.

- FÜR DIE BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND :
- POUR LA RÉPUBLIQUE FÉDÉRALE D'ALLEMAGNE :
- VOOR DE BONDSREPUBLICK DUITSLAND :
- FÖR FÖRBUNDSREPUBLICKEN TYKSLAND :
- FÜR DAS KÖNIGREICH BELGIEN :
- POUR LE ROYAUME DE BELGIQUE :
- VOOR HET KONINKRIJK BELGIË :
- FÖR KONUNGARIKET BELGIEN :
- FÜR DIE FRANZÖSISCHE REPUBLIK :
- POUR LA RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE :
- VOOR DE FRANSE REPUBLIEK :

FAIT à PARIS, le 5 octobre 1962

en un seul exemplaire, en langues allemande, française, néerlandaise et suédoise, le texte français faisant foi en cas de contestation. Cet exemplaire sera déposé dans les archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères de la République française.

Ce Ministère délivrera une copie certifiée conforme aux États signataires ou adhérents.

*de hender*  
*Ja spar*  
*van bouwel*

GEDAAN te PARIJIS, de 5 October 1962

in een enkel exemplaar, in de Duitse, de Franse, de Nederlandse en de Zweedse taal; in geval geschil is de Franse tekst doorslaggevend. Dit exemplaar wordt nedergelegd in het archief van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken van de Franse Republiek.

Genoemd Ministerie doet een voor eensluidend gewaarmerkt afschrift aan de onder-tekenende of toetredende Staten toekomen.

- FÜR DAS KÖNIGREICH DER NIEDERLANDE :
- POUR LE ROYAUME DES PAYS-BAS :
- VOOR HET KONINKRIJK DER NEDERLANDEN :
- FÖR KONUNGARIKET NEDERLÄNDERNA :
- POUR LE ROYAUME DE SUÈDE :
- VOOR HET KONINKRIJK ZWEDEN :
- FÖR KONUNGARIKET SVERIGE :

SOM SKEDDE I PARIS den 5 oktober 1962

i ett enda exemplar på tyska, franska, nederländska och svenska språken; i fall av tvist äger den franska texten vitsord. Detta exemplar skall deponeras i franska utrikesministeriets arkiv.

Detta ministerium skall översända en bestyrkt avskrift till samtliga signatärstater eller anslutna stater.

*M. Beegen*  
*V. de Vries*

5 October 1962

Founding Members Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden sign the ESO Convention.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



7 November 1963

Chile is chosen as the site for the ESO observatory and the *Convenio* (also known as the *Acuerdo*), the agreement between Chile and ESO, is signed.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

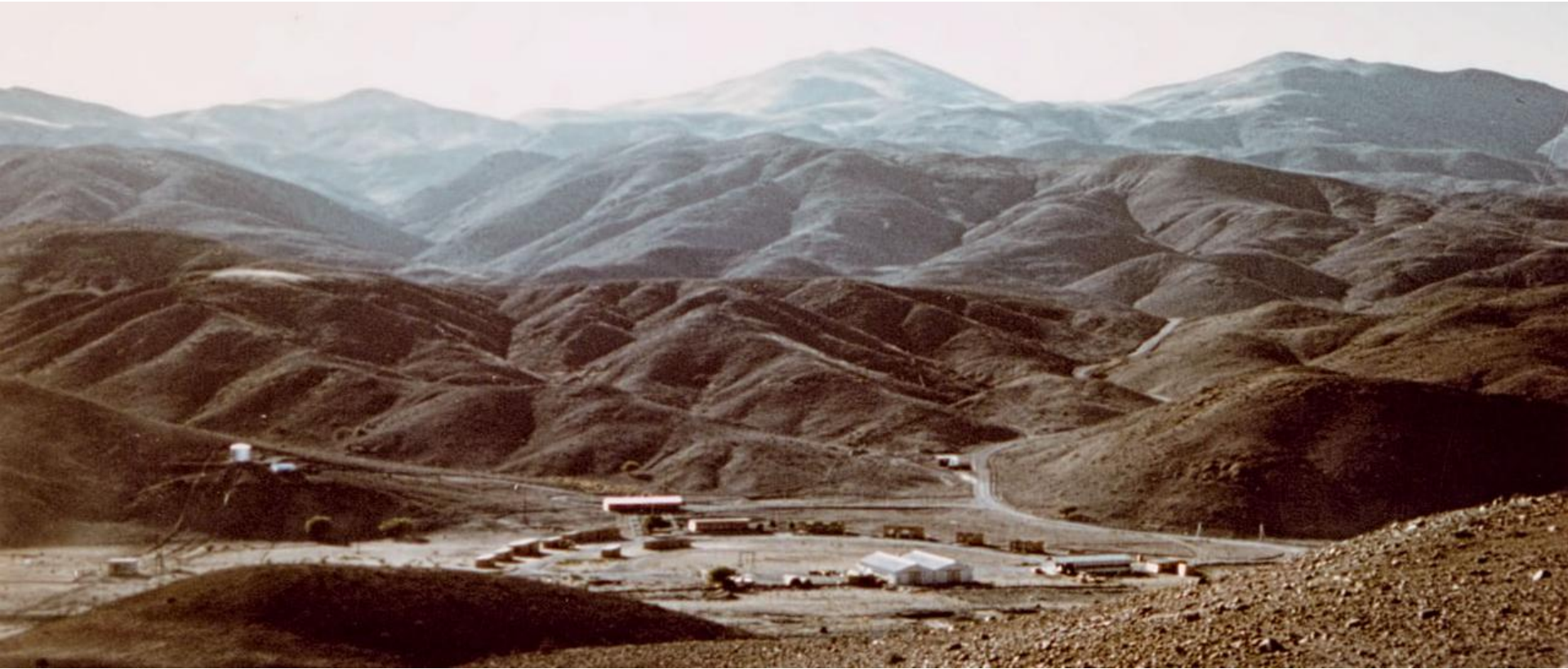


26 May 1964

The ESO Council selects the mountain Cinchado Nord — later to become La Silla — as the site of its observatory.



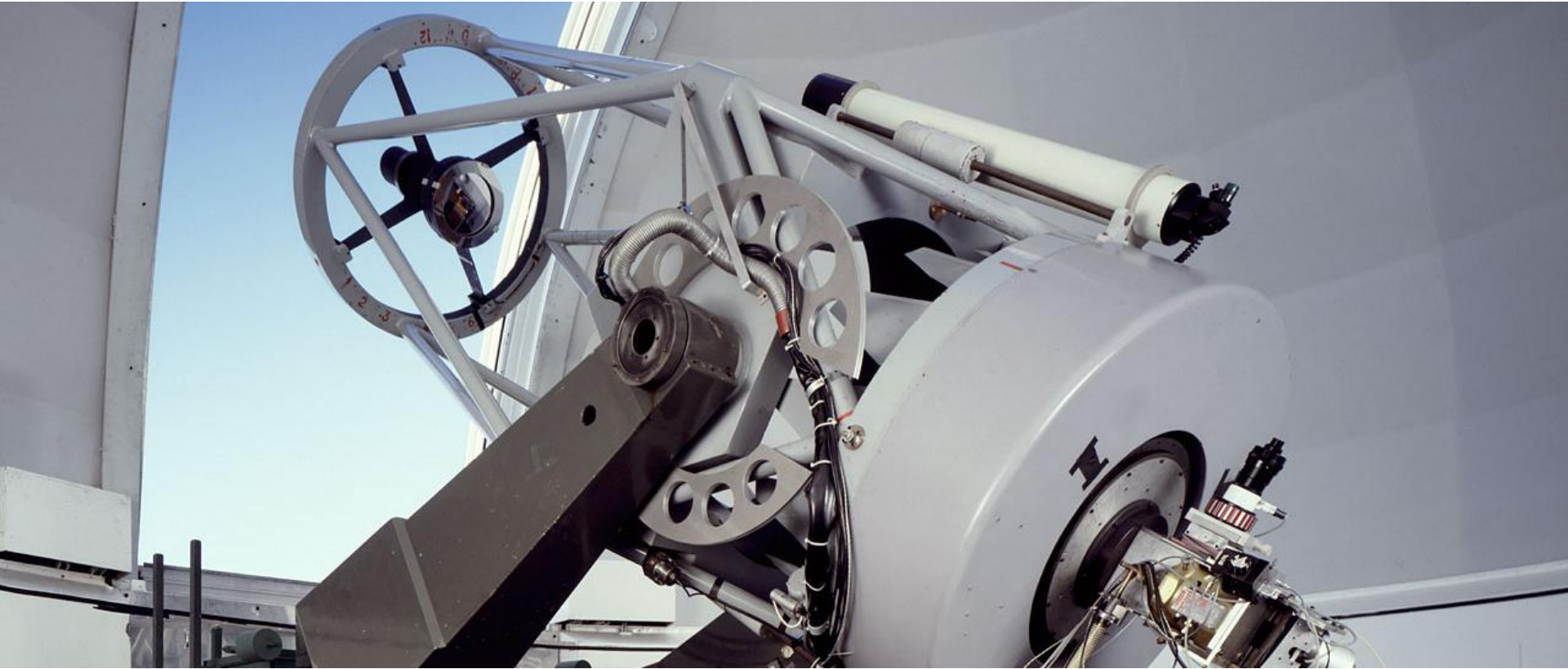
# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



30 October 1964

Acquisition of La Silla Mountain and land for the Chile headquarters in Vitacura.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



30 November 1966

First light for the ESO 1-metre telescope at La Silla, the first telescope to be used by ESO in Chile.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

24 August 1967

Denmark formally joins ESO (Member State 6).





# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



25 March 1969

Inauguration of the ESO site at La Silla by the President of the Republic of Chile, Eduardo Frei Montalva, and of the ESO Chile headquarters in Santiago's Vitacura district.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



2 December 1975

The ESO Council approves Garching bei München, Germany, as the new home for ESO's Headquarters.





# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



7 November 1976

First light for the ESO 3.6-metre telescope.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



1978

Completion of the Quick Blue Survey done with the 1-m Schmidt telescope.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



5 May 1981

Inauguration of the new ESO Headquarters in Garching, Germany.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

1 March 1982

Switzerland formally joins ESO (Member State 7).





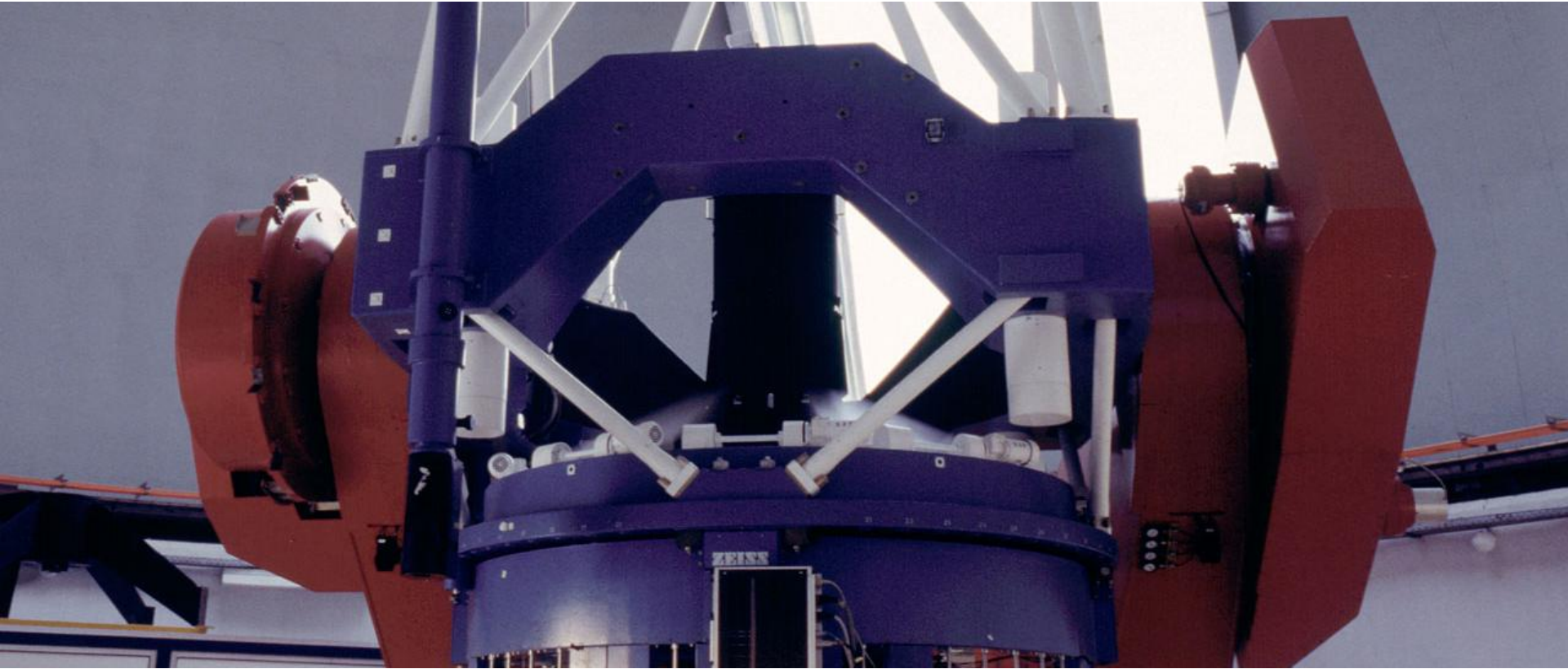
# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

24 May 1982

Italy formally joins ESO (Member State 8).



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



22 June 1983

First light for the MPG/ESO 2.2-metre telescope.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



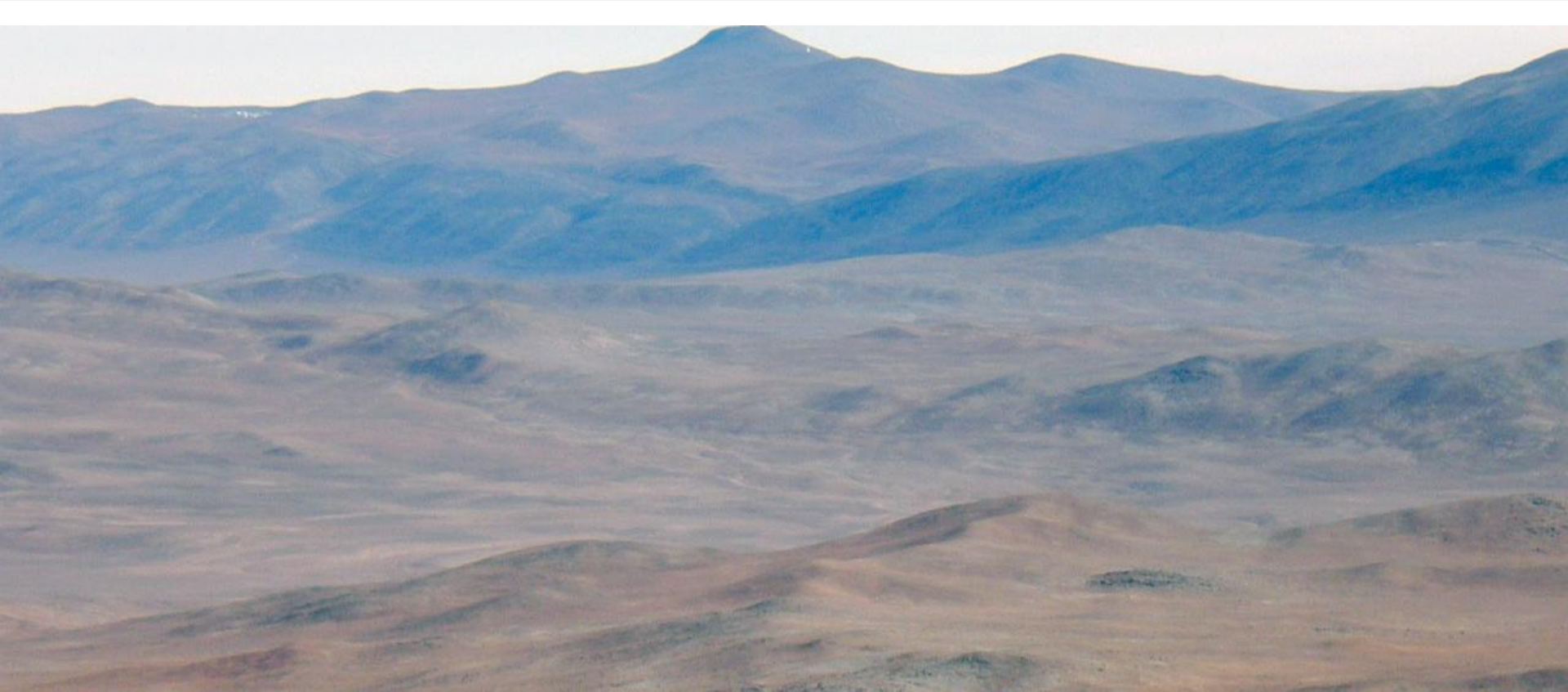
8 December 1987

Decision is taken by the ESO Council to build the Very Large Telescope (VLT).





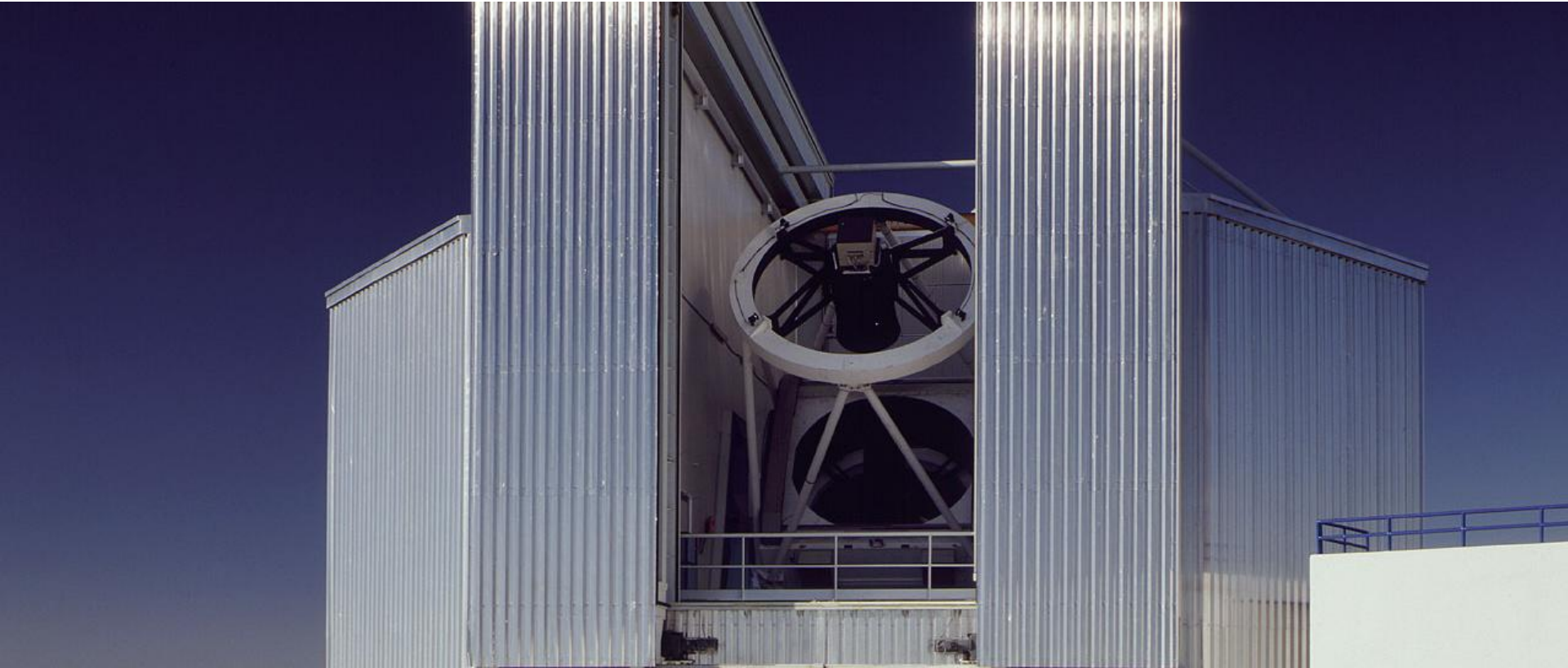
# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



October 1988

The Chilean Government donates the land around Cerro Paranal to ESO.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



23 March 1989

First light of the New Technology Telescope (NTT).



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



4 December 1990

Paranal is selected by ESO as the site for the VLT.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

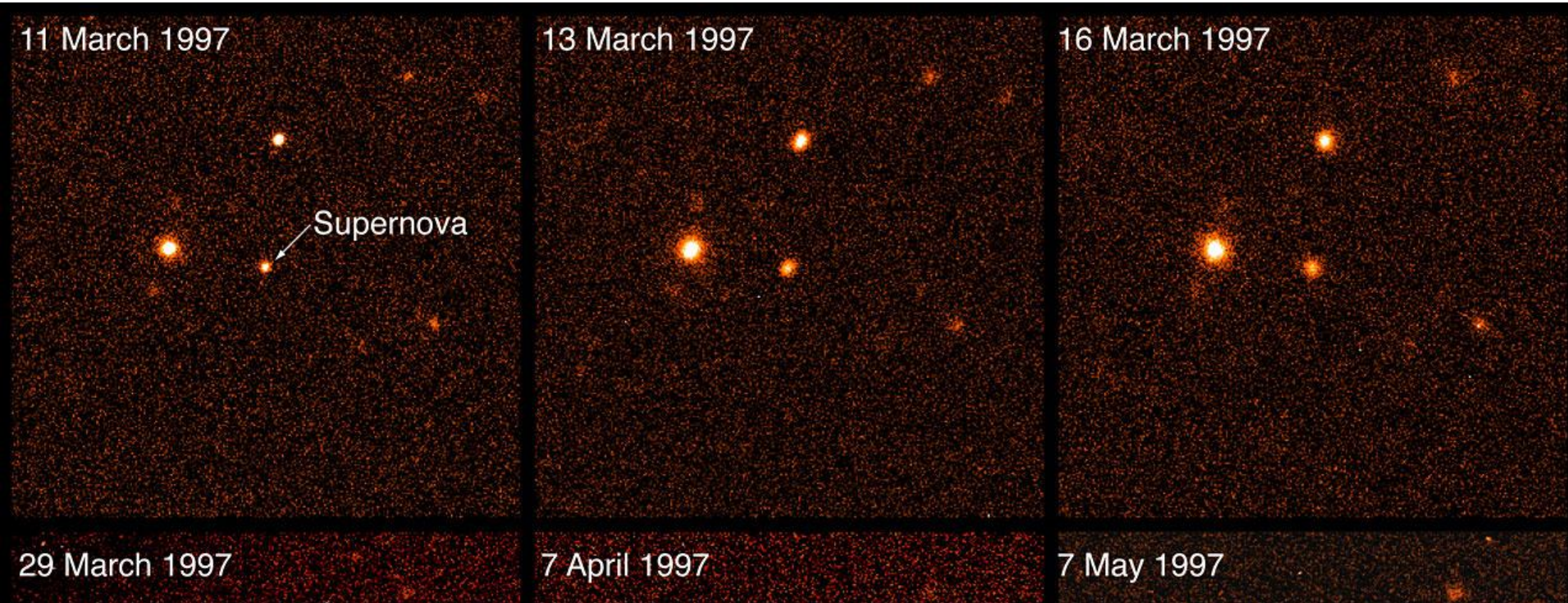


25 May 1998

First light for the VLT's first Unit Telescope (UT1), Antu.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



## 15 December 1998

Two independent research teams, with work partly based on observations of exploding stars with astronomical telescopes at La Silla, show that the expansion of the Universe is accelerating. The 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded for this result.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

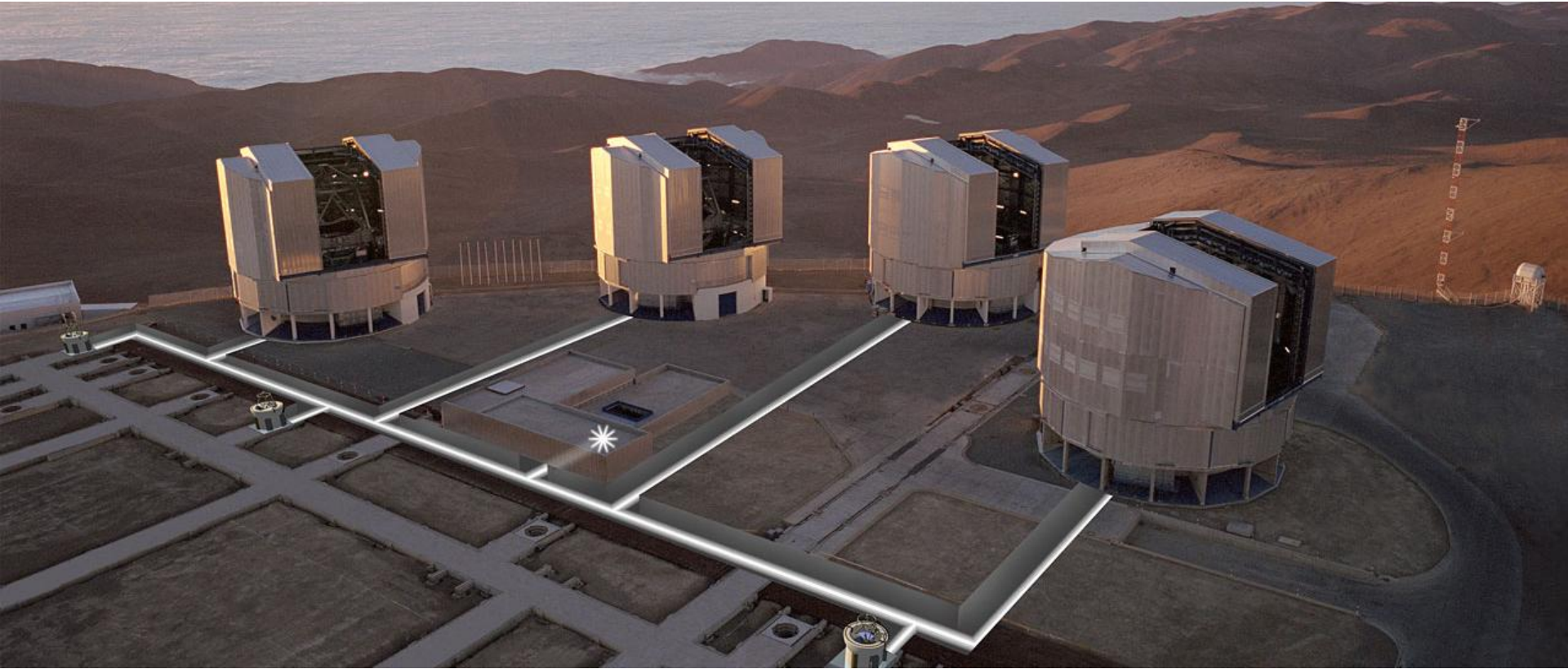


5 March 1999

Official inauguration of Paranal Observatory.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



17 March 2001

First light for the Very Large Telescope Interferometer (VLTI).

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



5 April 2001

ESO signed an agreement with representatives from North America to build ALMA on the Chajnantor Plateau (Japan joined in 2004).



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



7 May 2001

Portugal formally joins ESO (Member State 9).

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

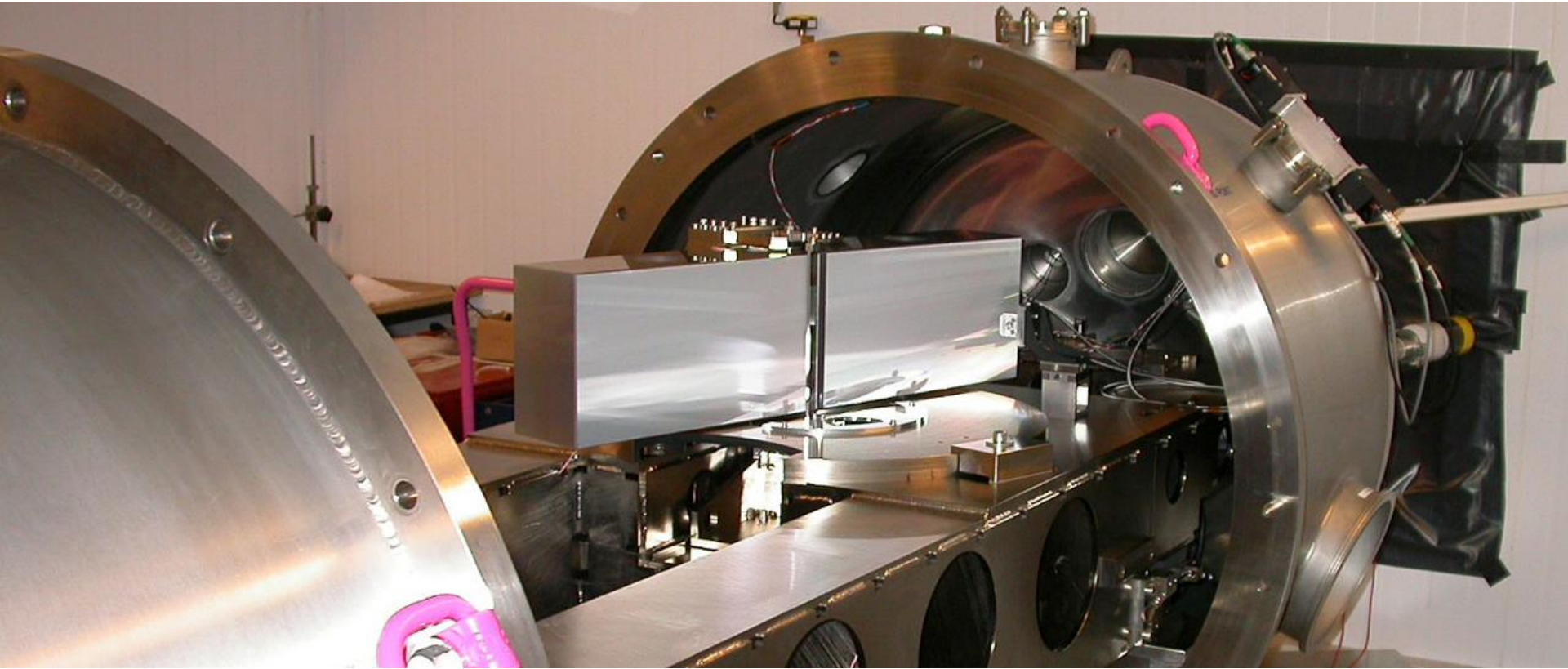
24 June 2002

The United Kingdom formally joins ESO  
(Member State 10).





# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



11 February 2003

First light of the High Accuracy Radial Velocity Planet Searcher (HARPS) at ESO's 3.6-metre telescope at the La Silla Observatory.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



25 July 2003

The Republic of Chile granted free concession of the land on Chajnantor for the execution of the ALMA project .



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



6 April 2004

After more than 1000 nights of observations at La Silla, spread over 15 years, astronomers determine the motions of more than 14 000 solar-like stars residing in the neighbourhood of the Sun, showing that our home galaxy has led a much more turbulent and chaotic life than previously assumed.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



7 July 2004

Finland formally joins ESO (Member State 11).



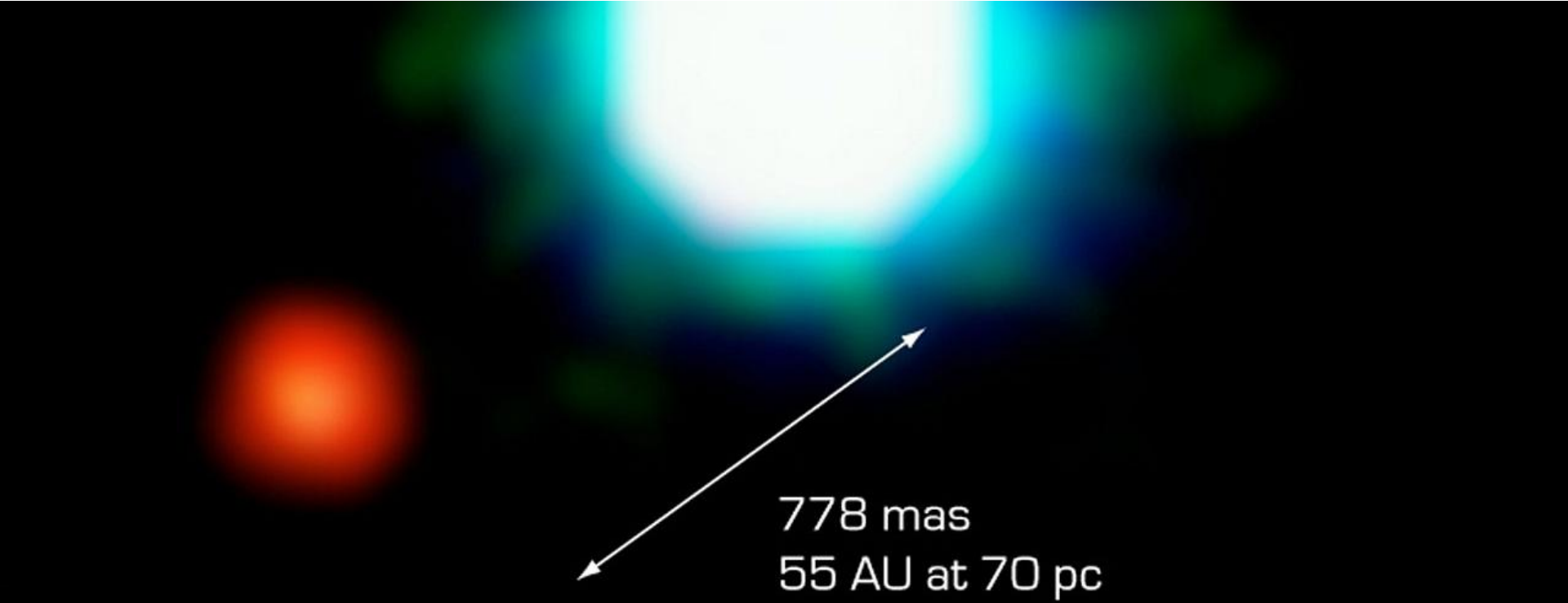
# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



17 August 2004

Using the VLT, astronomers measure the age of the oldest star known in the Milky Way: 13.2 billion years old.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



10 September 2004

The VLT obtains the first-ever image of a planet outside the Solar System.



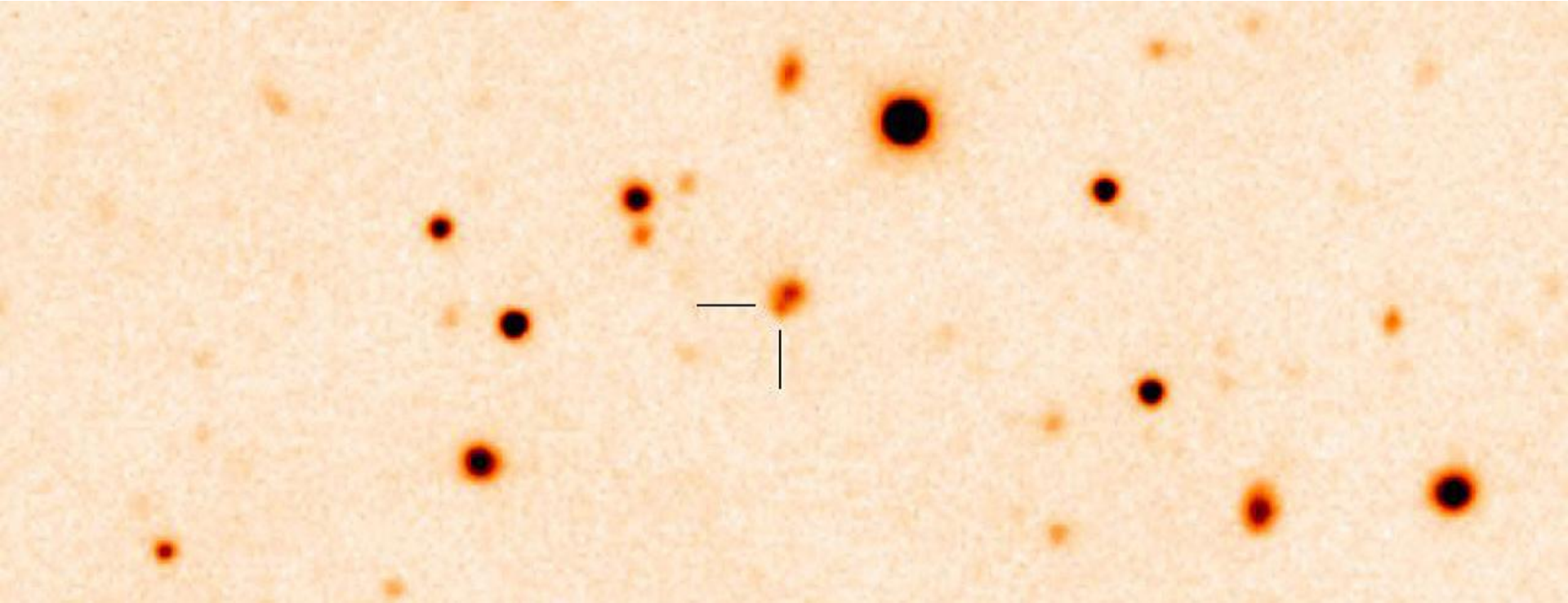
# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



14 July 2005

First light for the submillimetre Atacama Pathfinder Experiment (APEX).

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



6 October 2005

ESO telescopes provide definitive proof that long gamma-ray bursts are linked with the ultimate explosions of massive stars, solving a long-standing puzzle.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



28 January 2006

First light of the VLT laser guide star, on the VLT's UT4, Yepun.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



14 February 2007

Spain formally joins ESO (Member State 12).

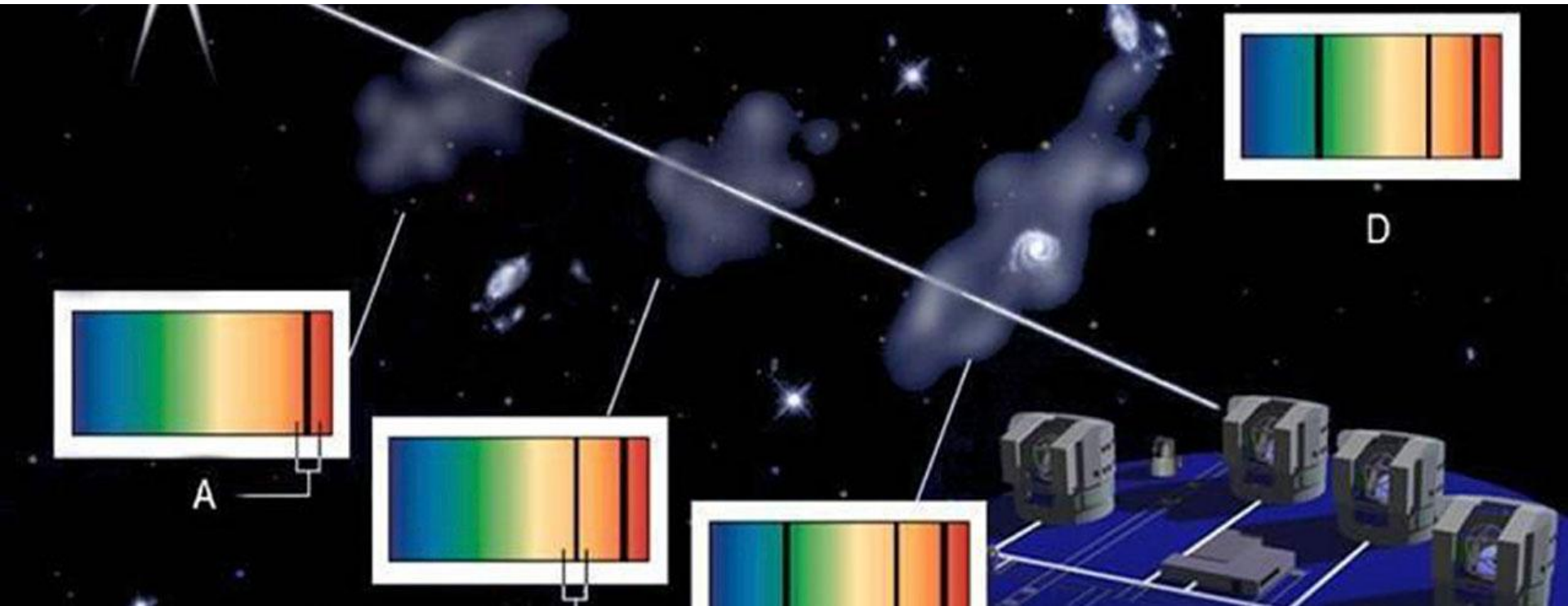


# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



30 April 2007

The Czech Republic formally joins ESO  
(Member State 13).



13 May 2008

The VLT detects carbon monoxide molecules in a galaxy located almost 11 billion light-years away for the first time, allowing astronomers to obtain the most precise measurement of the cosmic temperature at such a remote epoch.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



18 November 2008

The VLT and APEX team up to study the violent flares from the supermassive black hole at the centre of the Milky Way, revealing material being stretched out as it orbits in the intense gravity close to the central black hole.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



10 December 2008

Several of ESO's flagship telescopes were used in a 16-year-long study to obtain the most detailed view ever of the surroundings of the supermassive black hole lurking at the heart of our galaxy.



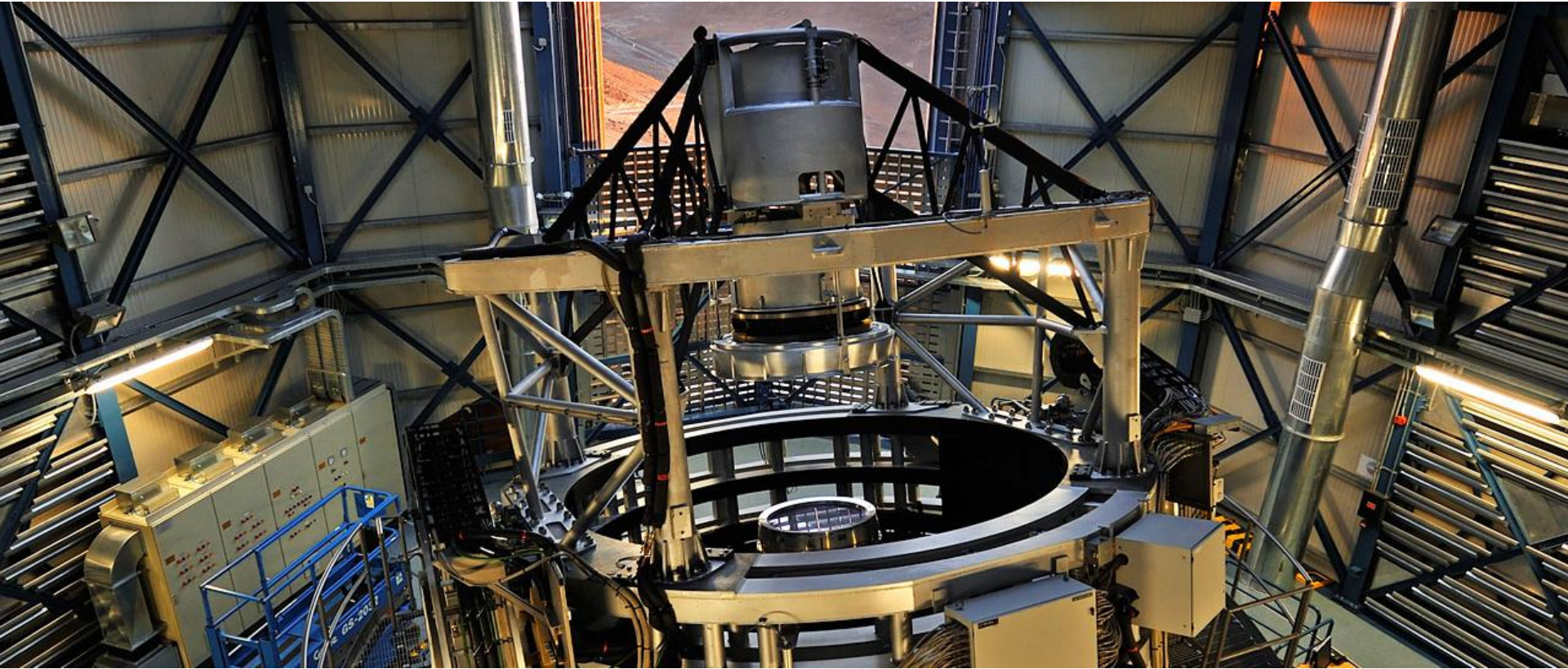
# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



1 July 2009

Austria formally joins ESO (Member State 14).

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



11 December 2009

VISTA, the pioneering new survey telescope, starts work.





13 January 2010

The first direct spectrum of an exoplanet is observed with the VLT.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

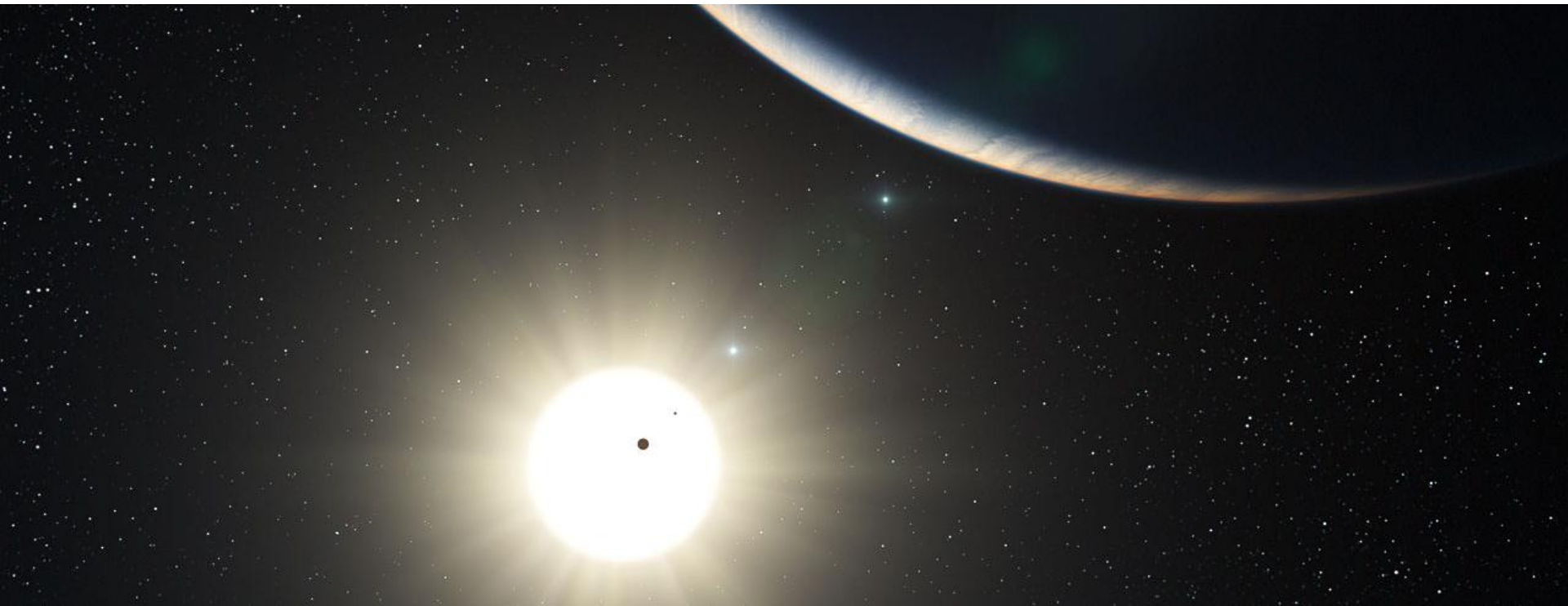


26 April 2010

Cerro Armazones is chosen as the site for the European Extremely Large Telescope (E-ELT).



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



24 August 2010

Astronomers using HARPS discover the richest planetary system so far, containing at least five planets around the Sun-like star HD 10180.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

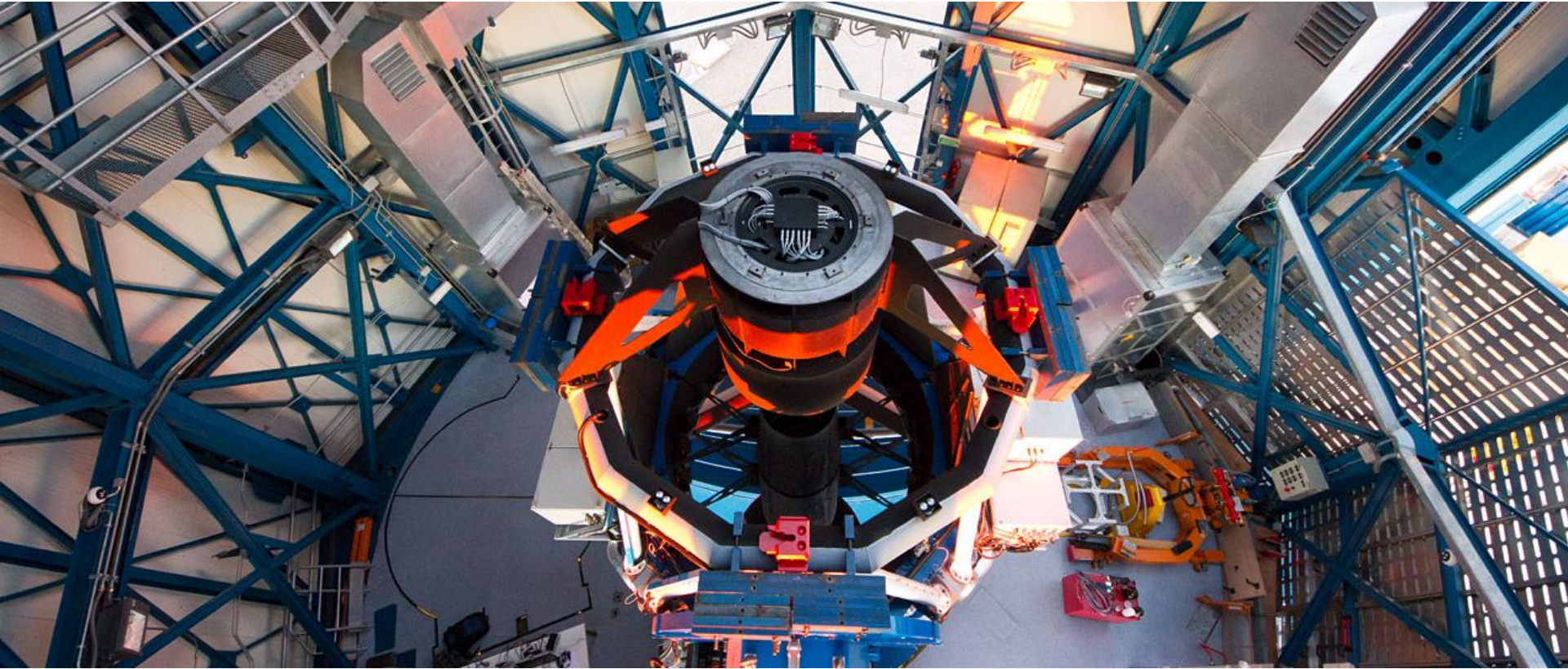


29 December 2010

Brazil signs the Accession Agreement to become member of ESO.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



8 June 2011

First images from the VLT Survey Telescope.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years

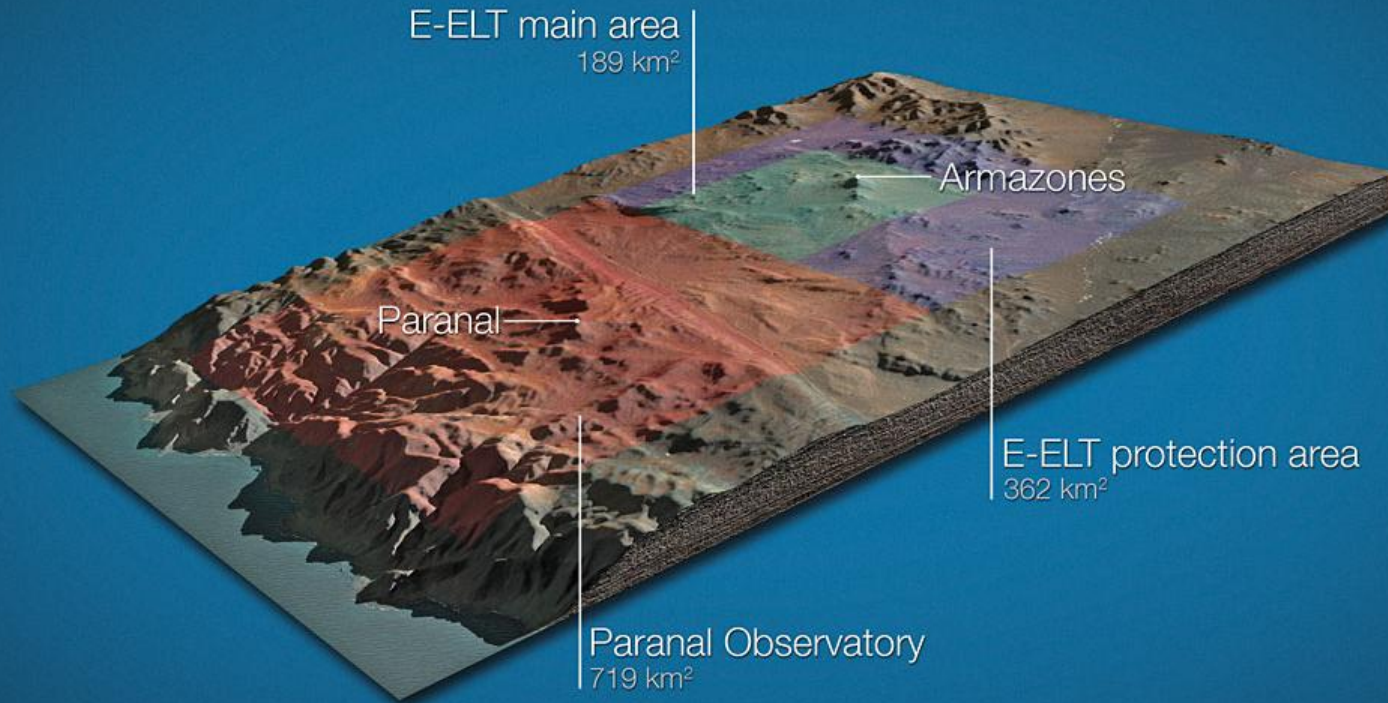


30 September 2011

ALMA starts Early Science and first image is published.



# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



13 October 2011

ESO and Chile sign an agreement on the land for the E-ELT.

# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



11 June 2012

The ESO Council approves the European Extremely Large Telescope (E-ELT) Programme, pending confirmation of four *ad referendum* votes.





# Fifty Highlights from Fifty Years



Celebrating 50 years of reaching new heights in astronomy

ESO looks forward to the next 50 years of its astronomy adventure, hopefully filled with many more milestones!