

OPENING STATEMENT OF OBSERVER DELEGATION

PRESIDENT ADOLFO SUAREZ

October 3, 1988

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to introduce the international observer delegation to the Chilean plebiscite.

Our delegation includes 55 individuals from 22 countries spanning six of the world's continents. Members of the delegation serve or have served as heads of state, members of parliament, leaders of political parties, election officials and diplomats in their respective countries. I understand a complete list of the delegation members has been made available to you.

Before explaining the purpose for our presence in Chile, I will introduce the co-leaders of the delegation. Misael Pastrana was president of Colombia from 1970 to 1974; he was co-leader of the 1986 international observer delegation in the Philippines. Bruce Babbitt was governor of the state of Arizona from 1978 to 1986 and was a candidate for the Democratic Party nomination for president in 1988. Peter Dailey was U.S. ambassador to Ireland and served as President Reagan's special envoy to NATO in 1983.

It is with considerable humility that this delegation is in Chile -- to observe, in accordance with Chilean law, the final developments of the plebiscite process. In two days, Chileans will have an opportunity to cast their ballots in a presidential plebiscite provided for by the 1980 Constitution. While in the past there has been much debate within Chile about the legitimacy of this process, at present virtually all sectors of Chilean society are committed to participating in the plebiscite. Indeed, a record number of Chileans, more than 7.4 million, have registered to vote during the past 18 months.

Given the historic nature of the plebiscite and its significance for the future of Chile, it is not surprising it has attracted considerable international attention. Chileans have welcomed

this attention and have expressed appreciation that international observers will be present for the plebiscite.

It should be emphasized we are here as observers and that our role is a very modest one. We have no official status and, of course, we are obliged to respect the laws of this country.

The role that we are going to play here is in accordance with the usual practice of having international observers present at elections in other countries. This practice is widely accepted in the world community.

To fulfill the objectives set for the delegation by the sponsors, we heard today from Chilean government officials, representatives of the "yes" and "no" campaigns and leaders of the Committee for Free Elections. Tomorrow the delegation will divide into small teams that will visit 11 cities from Arica in the north to Punta Arenas in the south. We will speak with Chileans involved in the plebiscite process in each of these cities and, on Wednesday, we will observe the balloting and counting processes, including the various unofficial counts that we expect will be announced on Wednesday night.

The delegation will regroup in Santiago on Thursday for a debriefing session. The leaders of the delegation will also consult with other groups observing the plebiscite. We will include in our report information from a variety of sources as long as it is possible to verify this information. On Friday morning, we will report our observations to the international community at a 10 a.m. press conference in the Gala room in this hotel. Our observations of this process, we expect, will reflect those of the Chilean people themselves.

We desire for Chile the institutionalization of the rule of law, a return to civilian rule and respect for human rights, political pluralism and individual and collective liberties.

Chile 1988