

STATEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL
OBSERVER DELEGATION

PRESIDENT ADOLFO SUAREZ

October 6, 1988

I am pleased to offer a statement on behalf of the international delegation that yesterday witnessed the Chilean plebiscite. This delegation, sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, includes 55 individuals from 22 countries and represents all political ideologies within the democratic spectrum.

Our delegation was present in more than 15 Chilean cities, from Punta Arenas in the south to Arica in the north. We were able to visit and observe the electoral process at 10 percent of the polling sites in the country. We will prepare a detailed report on our observations and issue it publicly in the near future.

Today, we would like to offer a consensus view of the leaders of our delegation as to what we have seen here in the past few days. For we realize we have witnessed an historic event and one that has captured the imagination and attention of the democratic peoples of the world.

The long and proud democratic tradition of Chile was reawakened yesterday by Chileans of all political persuasions. We congratulate the Chilean people. We want especially to congratulate those who played a key role in the conduct and administration of the plebiscite: the government, the supporters of the two positions, the electoral service and law enforcement officials.

It was our delegation's belief that the Chilean people have been heard. The expression of the people's will is a triumph for all Chileans and for democracy in the world.

We have been greatly impressed by the leaders of the "no" campaign, before and after the plebiscite. They have acted responsibly in calling for a national dialogue and reconciliation. Their objective was not a negative one; they sought not to defeat a president, but bring about free elections. Now they have the support of the Chilean people.

The government, in conducting a free and fair plebiscite, and acknowledging the result, has taken the first important step at reconciliation. Supporters of the "yes" also acted responsibly and patriotically in pursuing a different path.

This is the spirit in which democracy can thrive.

The international community, well-represented by this delegation, offers its strong support to the people of Chile as they begin the transition process. There can be no turning back in the effort to rekindle the democratic spirit that has made this a great nation.

Our view is that the result of this plebiscite demonstrates, more than anything else, a strong desire for free elections. We expect that the dialogue that will now begin will be influenced by that very positive aspiration. While matters of law must be reconciled, all should be motivated by a desire to satisfy the express wish of the Chilean people for democratically conducted elections.

The process and the results make this delegation believe that Chile has taken an irreversible step toward democracy. That is to say, toward national reconciliation, the establishment of representative government, respect for individual rights and toward a peaceful coexistence with freedom and development.

The delegation believes that from today onward, the Chilean people have begun a journey down a road which, through a necessary dialogue, with free elections, with full participation by all Chileans, will result in a consensus for change that will institutionalize peace, liberty and democracy.