

ALMA

GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY

A MOMENTOUS EVENT took place on 6 November, at the site of the ALMA “Operations Support Facility” (OSF), near Chajnantor where the array will be built. About 170 scientists and dignitaries from Europe, North America, Japan and Chile attended the groundbreaking ceremony for this global project. The pictures shown here and two of the speeches that were given (those by the ESO Director General and President of Council) tell the story.

ALMA will be the highest-altitude, full-time ground-based observatory in the world, at 5,000 metres altitude. Work at this altitude is difficult.

To help ensure the safety of the scientists and engineers at ALMA, operations will be conducted from the OSF, a compound located at a more comfortable altitude of 2,900 metres, between the cities of Toconao and San Pedro de Atacama, and within relatively easy reach of the array itself. The OSF will also be the base for the construction teams, and the 64 antennas will be assembled here.

A number of containers and other facilities are already located at the OSF, and it is very reminiscent of the early days of the construction of the VLT. Work on the OSF and on the ALMA site itself will now take place at an accelerated pace, paving the way for the arrival of the first elements of the array.

Also, at the Ground breaking ceremony, the new ALMA logo (see facing page) was unveiled.



The President of Council, Professor P. van der Kruit, energetically breaks the ground for ALMA along with Dr. W. Van Citters (NSF, Director of the Division of Astronomical Sciences) and Prof. M. Tarenghi (ALMA, Director).



Directions to everywhere from the site of the OSF, where the groundbreaking took place.