

Speech at Ten years of APEX Science, 26 January 2016

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Ambassador Schulze, Alcaldesa Berna, President Stratmann, Professor Menten, distinguished colleagues, friends, it is a pleasure to say a few words on behalf of ESO at today's celebration.

When ESO established its first observatory on La Silla in the nineteen sixties, the focus was entirely on the visual wavelength regime. But during the tenure of Lo Woltjer this changed with the arrival of the SEST, the Swedish ESO Submillimetre Telescope with a 15m diameter antenna, which started operations in early 1987. As the first submillimetre telescope in the Southern Hemisphere, it allowed exploration of a veritable terra incognita, resulting in many discoveries.

SEST operations came to an end in 2003, when it was clear that much could be gained by going to a higher site. ALMA had decided to go to Chajnantor, and Karl Menten and Rolf Guesten had the insight that if Bonn was fast with obtaining an antenna of the kind being considered for ALMA, there would be much to discover before ALMA would come on line. It was therefore natural to plan this as a six-year experiment, and to team up with Onsala Space Observatory and ESO, with the 12m antenna and instrumentation provided by Bonn and Onsala, and ESO operating the antenna for the three-way partnership between the Max Planck Gesellschaft, the Swedish Research Council and ESO. Operations commenced in 2006 and were so successful that a five-year extension was agreed in 2012 despite the fact that by that time ALMA had come on line. Today we celebrate ten years of impressive scientific results, with more to come.

It is fair to say that without the SEST on La Silla, APEX in its current incarnation would not have happened and ESO might very well not have become involved in ALMA. The SEST and APEX partnerships have helped develop a significant community of astronomers in the ESO Member States which uses the

submillimetre atmospheric window to study the Universe, and was therefore also well-prepared for capitalizing on ALMA's transformational capabilities. This development has also grown a strong cadre of operations staff inside ESO, some of whom started at SEST and now are active here at APEX, while others work at ALMA or elsewhere in the world. It is very appropriate to see many persons who made all of this possible here today, including all four APEX station managers, and honour them.