

German Foreign Minister Visits Paranal Observatory

Replicated from ESO Press Release 02/02 (7 March 2002)



Figure 1: Minister Fischer (left) is received at the entrance to the Observatory by the ESO Representative in Chile, Daniel Hofstadt.

During his tour of countries in South America, the Honourable Foreign Minister of Germany, Mr. Joschka Fischer, stopped over at the ESO Paranal Observatory on the night of Wednesday, March 6–7, 2002.

Arriving in Antofagasta, capital of the II Chilean region, the Foreign Minister and his suite was met by local Chilean officials, headed by Mr. Jorge Molina, Intendente of the Region, as well as His Excellency, the German Ambassador to Chile, Mr. Georg CS Dick and others. In the afternoon of March 6, the Foreign

Minister, accompanied by a distinguished delegation from the German Federal Parliament as well as by businessmen from Germany, travelled to Paranal, site of the world's largest optical/infrared astronomical facility, the ESO Very Large Telescope (VLT).

The delegation was welcomed by the Observatory Director, Dr. Roberto Gilmozzi, the VLT Programme Manager, Professor Massimo Tarenghi, the ESO Representative in Chile, Mr. Daniel Hofstadt and ESO staff members, and also by Mr. Reinhard Junker, Deputy Direc-

tor General (European Co-operation) at the German Ministry for Education and Research.

The visitors were shown the various high-tech installations at this remote desert site, some of which have been constructed by German firms. Moreover, most of the large, front-line VLT astronomical instruments have been built in collaboration between ESO and European research institutes, several of these in Germany.

One of the latest arrivals to Paranal, the CONICA camera, was built under an ESO contract by the Max-Planck Institutes for Astronomy (MPIA, in Heidelberg) and Extraterrestrial Physics (MPE, in Garching).

The guests had the opportunity to enjoy the spectacular sunset over the Pacific Ocean from the terrace of the new Residencia building. At the beginning of the night, the Minister was invited to the Control Room for the VLT Interferometer (VLTI) from where this unique new facility is now being thoroughly tested before it is put into service later this year.

In his expression of thanks, Minister Fischer enthusiastically referred to his visit at Paranal. He said he was truly impressed by the technology of the telescopes and considered the VLT project a model of European technological and scientific cooperation.

Later in the evening, the Minister was invited to perform an observing sequence at the console of the MELIPAL telescope.



Figure 2: During the visit to the observing platform at the top of Paranal: from left to right, the Minister, VLT-Program-Manager Massimo Tarenghi and Observatory Director Roberto Gilmozzi.

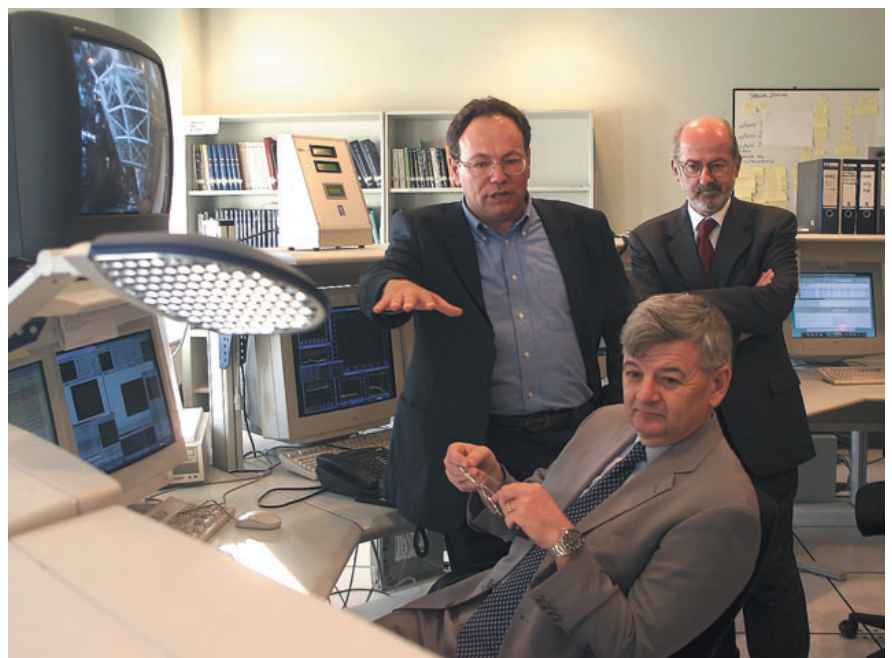


Figure 3: The Minister, seated at the control console for the VLT ANTU telescope (Roberto Gilmozzi and Massimo Tarenghi in the background).