

HIGH HONOUR FOR DANIEL HOFSTADT

GONZALO ARGANDOÑA AND FELIX MIRABEL, ESO

Daniel Hofstadt, former ESO representative in Chile, was honoured last May 12 by the Chilean government, in a ceremony held at the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the presence of ESO Director General, Dr. Catherine Cesarsky.

Mr. Hofstadt received from the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ignacio Walker the Medal “Bernardo O’Higgins”. This award is given by the Chilean government to selected foreign citizens in recognition of their outstanding services and contributions to the country, particularly in the fields of science, technology and culture.

Ignacio Walker expressed the gratitude of the Chilean government for ESO contributions to the education in the country, including the establishment of scholarship programmes for undergraduate students in region II, training courses in science and astronomy for teachers, the donation of a permanent astronomy exhibition at the popular Interactive Museum in Santiago (MIM) and the implementation of an itinerant planetarium, among recent projects supported and financed by ESO in Chile.

“It is evident that the astronomy in Chile is in a growing stage, in which the investments of ESO and the work of outstanding individuals like Mr. Hofstadt have played a significant role,” said Walker.

This homage from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the culmination of a long and fruitful career of Daniel Hofstadt within ESO, since 1972 when he first joined the organization as electronic engineer at La Silla Observatory to work on the advancement of instrumentation of the telescopes.



Daniel Hofstadt receives the award “Bernardo O’Higgins” from the Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs Ignacio Walker (at the right).

From the early 80’s, he assumed new duties, becoming responsible for technical research service. He was also involved in the installation of all telescopes arriving those years to LSO, including the 3.6-m telescope and the NTT.

A few years later, he became chairman of the management team at LSO, coordinating the different services managed by that time from La Silla, including administration, technical services and personnel.

In 1995, he moved to the Vitacura office in Santiago to assume further responsibilities, as the ESO representative in Chile.

He took up this new role while the VLT was under construction at Paranal, in northern Chile. By that time, Mr. Hofstadt faced the challenge of expanding the cooperation and dialogue between ESO and Chile, estab-

lishing strong relationships with the government and its authorities, which allowed to successfully overcome the initial difficulties that affected VLT construction.

Later on, Daniel Hofstadt supervised the development and construction of the Paranal residence until its full completion. He also participated in the negotiations with the Chilean government that successfully ended in a new agreement that authorized ESO to establish a new centre for astronomical observation in the country, the Atacama Large Millimeter Array (ALMA).

On April 1 this year, Daniel Hofstadt retired from ESO, and Felix Mirabel became the new representative of the organization in Chile. Mirabel also assumed the role of Head of ESO’s Office for Science in Chile.

The Chilean Minister of the Interior, José Miguel Insulza; former ESO representative in Chile, Daniel Hofstadt; his wife Sonia Hofstadt; and Dr. Catherine Cesarsky.

