

At the end of the ceremony, Pedro Cruz and other members of the local communities spontaneously performed their own rituals for the inauguration of the site museum. They paid their respects to the high mountains and to the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth), in an old tradition that was joined by ALMA executives and Chilean authorities, asking for prosperity and harmony for all the people living now in this arid and ancient ground.

Photo: C. Romero



Massimo Tarengi, ALMA director, performing the local ritual of 'payment' to *Pachamama* (Mother Earth), at the inauguration ceremony of the new site museum.

ESO-Chile Fund for Astronomy: 10 Years of Productive Scientific Collaboration

Gonzalo Argandoña, Felix Mirabel (ESO)

In a ceremony in Santiago in June 2006, ESO and the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Supplementary Agreement. This agreement granted to Chilean astronomers up to 10% of the total observing time on ESO telescopes and established an annual fund for the development of astronomy, managed by the 'ESO-Chile Joint Committee'.

The celebration event was hosted by ESO Director General, Dr. Catherine Cesarsky, and the Director of Special Policy for the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Luis Winter. "ESO's commitment is, and always will be, to promote astronomy and scientific knowledge in the country hosting our observatories", said Dr. Cesarsky. "We hope Chile and Europe will continue with great achieve-



At the ceremony to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the ESO-Chile Joint Committee: (from left to right) Felix Mirabel (ESO Representative and Head of the Science Office in Chile), Dr. Catherine Cesarsky (ESO Director General), Dr. Leonardo Bronfman (Director of Astronomy Department, Universidad de Chile; representative of the Chilean scientific community within the ESO-Chile Joint Committee), and, speaking, Ambassador Luis Winter (Director of Special Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile).

ments in this fascinating joint adventure, the exploration of the Universe."

On behalf of the government of Chile, Ambassador Luis Winter outlined the historical importance of the Supplementary Agreement, ratified by the Chilean Congress in 1996. "Such is the magnitude of the ESO-Chile Joint Committee that, only

in 2005, this annual fund represented eight per cent of all financing sources for Chilean astronomy, including those from government and from universities", Ambassador Winter said. The appointed Chilean astronomer for the ESO-Chile Joint Committee, Dr. Leonardo Bronfman, also took part in the ceremony, along with ambassadors in Chile of ESO mem-

The ESO-Chile Fund has supported the improvement of astronomy teaching at schools for children and young people. In the picture, CADIAS, the Astronomy Teaching Support Centre, funded by the annual fund.



ber states, and representatives of the Chilean government and the scientific community.

History and impact of the ESO-Chile fund

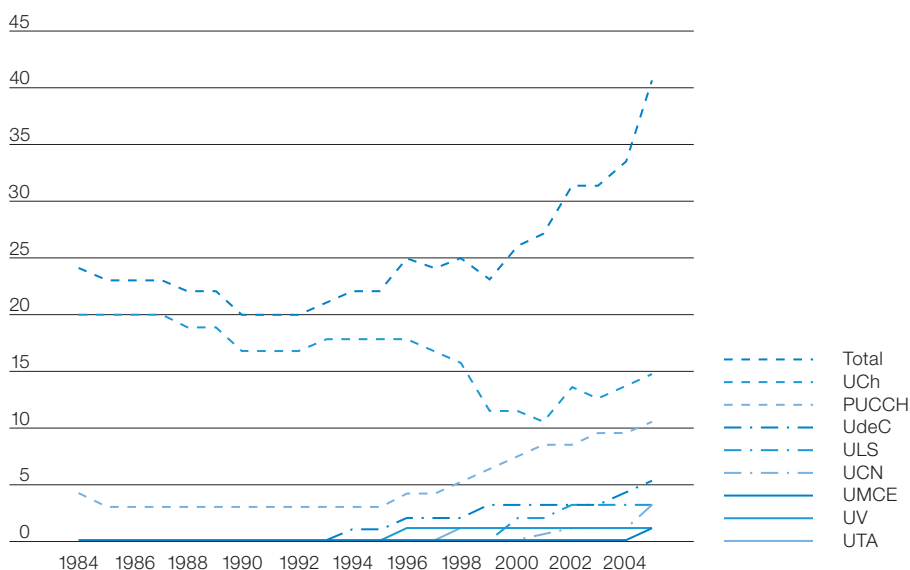
The formal relations between ESO and its host country, the Republic of Chile, were first established through the Convention of 1963, which allowed the successful construction and operation of the La Silla Observatory. Decades later, during the years of VLT construction, an Interpretative and Supplementary Agreement to the Convention was signed and was ratified by the Chilean Congress on September 1996. The new agreement guaranteed to Chilean astronomers privileged access to the state-of-the-art telescopes installed at La Silla, Paranal and Chajnantor for deserving research

projects. To make the most of this vast scientific wealth, an annual fund was established for the development of astronomy and related sciences in the country.

A decade after the launch of this initiative, ESO edited a special book, based on the reports of the beneficiaries of the annual fund, to review the impact of the numerous projects financed so far. The book, entitled "10 Years Exploring the Universe", was launched in the same celebration event at ESO Vitacura. The publication presents a global view of recent developments of astronomy in Chile.

Since the beginning, the ESO-Chile fund has granted over 2.5 million euros to finance new positions of post-doc and astronomy professors at major Chilean universities, development of research infrastructures, organisation of scientific

Evolution of the number of astronomy positions at the major Chilean universities.



The book "10 Years Exploring the Universe" presents a global view of recent developments of astronomy in Chile thanks to the ESO-Chile Annual Fund.



congresses, workshops for science teachers and astronomy outreach programmes for the public.

In addition to the 400 000 euros given annually by ESO to the ESO-Chile Joint Committee, around 550 000 euros are granted every year to finance regional collaboration programmes, fellowships for students in Chilean universities, and the development of radio astronomy through the ALMA-Chile Committee. In total, apart from the 10 % of the observing time at all ESO telescopes, ESO contributes 950 000 euros annually for the promotion of astronomy and scientific culture in Chile.

As a consequence of these funds and other positive stimulating factors in Chile in recent years, there has been a rapid development in the size and scientific impact of the national astronomical community. According to a study by the Chilean Academy of Sciences in 2005, the number of astronomers has doubled over the last 20 years and there has been an eightfold increase in the number of scientific publications. The same study stated that astronomy could be the first scientific discipline in Chile with the standards of a developed country, with additional benefits in terms of technological improvement and growth of human resources.

The book "10 Years Exploring the Universe" can be downloaded in PDF format from <http://www.eso.cl> (Spanish version) and <http://www.eso.org/outreach/press-rel/pr-2006/pr-21-06.html> (English version). The report by the Chilean Academy of Sciences, "Analysis and Projections of 2005 Chilean Sciences – Chapter: Astronomy" is available at http://www.sochias.cl/extras/astro2005_final.pdf.