

A constructive and serious actor

INTERVIEW WITH HERALDO MUÑOZ VALENZUELA

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REPUBLIC OF CHILE



HERALDO MUÑOZ holds a BA in Political Science from the State University of New York, and a PhD in International Studies from the University of Denver. He has held several positions in the Government of Chile, including Minister Secretary General of Government (2002-03), Deputy Foreign Minister (2000-02), Permanent Representative to the UN (2003-10) and Ambassador to the Organisation of American States (1990-94). Prior to his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs in March 2014, he was Assistant Secretary-General of the UN and LAC Regional Director of UNDP.

What are the key aims, objectives and guiding principles of Chile's foreign policy, given the growing importance of Latin America to the global economy?

Chile's foreign policy is based on permanent national interests and solid, longstanding principles. The respect for international law and treaties, the defense of territorial integrity, the promotion and defense of human rights and democracy, and the responsibility to cooperate are the principles that guide Chilean foreign policy, regardless of the Administration in power.

Our top priority is Latin America and the Caribbean, with special attention to South America. We are certain that regional integration and cooperation should be the most effective way to make ourselves heard in a world increasingly structured on the basis of mega regions, that define the new rules of the international system. Like-minded countries, many in Europe, are also on our priority agenda.

Chile is strategically located on the Pacific basin, placing us in a privileged position in the current global economy to connect the Atlantic with the Pacific coast. To take advantage of this situation, we are working hard at building bridges between Latin America and the Asia Pacific region through the Pacific Alliance, in pragmatic convergence with MERCOSUR. In addition, given the dynamism and close relations of Chile to the Asia Pacific markets, Chile has signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) and seeks to adhere to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

How are Chile's relations with Europe developing? How important is Europe to Chile as a diplomatic and trading partner, and what is Chile's experience with the EU-Chile Association Agreement?

For Chile, Europe is a strategic partner. We share core values and principles such as democracy, individual freedoms and human rights. In the trade arena, there is no doubt about the importance of the EU for us. The bloc is Chile's third largest trade partner after the China and the United States. Also, the EU is our main investment partner, accounting for nearly 25 per cent of total investment over the past five years.

President Michelle Bachelet attaches an enormous importance to deepening bilateral ties with European countries in strategic areas, such as science, technology, innovation and education, as well as to the modernisation of the Chile-EU Association

Agreement and the FTA with the European Free Trade Association. The Presidential visits during the last two years to Germany, Spain, France, Italy, the Vatican, Austria, and Belgium as well as the ones this year to Sweden and the United Kingdom are a sign of our interest in promoting those ties.

What role will Chile play in ensuring the region's continued prosperity and stability? How are relations with your neighbours developing?

Within our region, we pay special attention to our three neighbours. We have built a strategic relationship with Argentina, and recently agreed on a joint agenda for the coming years, which touches upon energy, migration, infrastructure, trade, defense, among many other areas. With Peru, we have a number of common challenges, which we address both at the bilateral level and within the Pacific Alliance. In the case of Bolivia, unfortunately our neighbour has decided to re-litigate the past instead of looking towards the future, as we have always proposed. Now we are focused on the presentation of our counter-arguments to a lawsuit brought by Bolivia against Chile in the ICJ, seeking sovereign access to the sea through Chilean territory. This lawsuit is unconvincing, as it violates the 1904 treaty which settled borders between the two countries and actually gave Bolivia full free transit access to the sea through our territory.

In the region we have contributed to ensuring peace and security through our participation in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Haiti, accompanying the peace negotiations between Colombia and the FARC guerrillas, and have pledged our participation as guarantor in the upcoming peace process with the ELN guerrilla group. We will also collaborate with Colombia in the post-conflict stage and the implementation of the peace agreements.

We are also committed to the prosperity and development of Central America and the Caribbean, where our Agency for International Development Cooperation is carrying out many triangular and South-South projects, especially in the areas of gender, public safety, education and good governance.

What progress is being made with the implementation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership?

This agreement is in line with our open trade policy and is a natural path for ensuring our Pacific projection. Chile

is an open economy with an extensive network of trade agreements: 25 FTAs with 64 countries, accounting for 94 per cent of Chile's exports. Today, our main challenge is to add value to our exports and integrate global and regional value chains. The TPP is one of the building blocks that will help us reach that goal.

The TPP represents 40 per cent of global GDP, almost one third of global trade. It is a market of 800 million people, and creates opportunities for economic growth and the diversification of our exports, leading to progress and more jobs.

We signed the agreement on February 4th and expect to send it for Congressional discussion and eventual approval during the next few months. We are currently holding a number of consultations and informational meetings with parliamentarians, civil society, entrepreneurs, and other actors.

How important is regional integration to Latin America's development? What mechanisms are helping to reinforce the objectives of a continent-wide market? How do you view the future development of UNASUR?

Chile is an active and constructive player in regional integration initiatives, such as CELAC, UNASUR and the Pacific Alliance. It is clear that we need countries in the region to work closely to boost our economies and to face the challenges posed by globalisation. For example, regional markets are the main destinations for our manufactured exports and services; yet intraregional trade remains low. When addressing global challenges such as climate change, there is no doubt that the voice of middle income countries, such as ours, will be heard more loudly when we speak as one.

In this context, our foreign policy promotes what we call "*convergence in diversity*," acknowledging our differences, yet recognising that we can move


forward in a pragmatic manner, in those areas where our interests coincide. A concrete example is the convergence we are seeking between the Pacific Alliance and MERCOSUR, where an action plan is being discussed, emphasising areas like trade facilitation and customs cooperation, electronic certification, and international mobility, among others.

UNASUR aspires to contribute to South America's integration. It has a mixed record, having played a constructive role in the resolution of conflicts and as an observer in elections held in the region. In addition, through the South American Defense Council, UNASUR is seeking a role in the cooperation between countries on defense matters and guaranteeing South America as a zone of peace.

How would you define Chile's global role in the coming decade?

Chile is a constructive and serious actor in the global scenario, particularly through multilateral initiatives. Chile will continue to promote and adhere to international norms and regimes that contribute to governance and international peace and stability in the world. That is at the core of our foreign policy. In this context, we will implement our obligations under international agreements, including the new Paris Agreement on climate change, and will make all efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A special goal will be the conservation of our oceans.

At the regional level, we will strive to build bridges among us that will allow us to grow economically, ensure social cohesion and promote sustainable development.

With "like-minded" countries we will address global challenges such as climate change and inequality, through joint initiatives in areas like innovation, science and technology, education, gender equality, renewable energies, sustainable fisheries, and conflict prevention. 

Our main challenge is to add value to our exports and integrate global and regional value chains. The TPP is one of the building blocks that will help us reach that goal

The dynamic port of Valparaíso

