

Inaugural speech by Manuel Antonio Garretón, President Local Organizing Committee (LOC) 21<sup>st</sup> World Congress of Political Science

Well, here we are! Today marks the culmination of three years of effort, for which we have given the best of ourselves and all the country's collaborative resources. And we must admit, it has not been easy. Indeed, beyond the organizational problems (registration, IT, logistics, program scheduling, etc.), the Congress had to deal with the unprecedented effects of the current financial crisis which affects the academic community, and more recently a pandemic to which, as a reputable international newspaper has recognized this week, Chile's response has been tremendously responsible and effective. Yet none of that can compare to the enormous satisfaction that one feels upon seeing so many of you who have traveled from so far and such generational and cultural diversity.

The numbers speak for themselves: 2358 participants in total, grouped into 613 sessions and representing close to 80 countries. We are convinced that the rest of this Congress will echo this initial success. Your presence tonight already confirms this.

As president of the Local Organizing Committee I would like to share with you some thoughts on what has motivated us, beyond the purely organizational and logistical aspects. There are, I think, three points.

First, this is the first World Congress in any of the social sciences to be organized in Chile, in a field that is relatively new, which is expanding and increasingly healthy, but still has a lot to learn from colleagues from other latitudes. Many of you know that this discipline suffered greatly during the dictatorship, as well as the great effort made in democracy to recover. This is a task that continues, and will involve more than one generation of academic and state institutions working together. At the same time, this recovery, and indeed its survival during the darkest days of dictatorship, would not have been possible without the active and constant support of the community of intellectuals, political scientists and social scientists from around the world. We have always thought of this Congress as a symbol of recognition and gratitude to them; a minimum and modest gesture for this historic debt.

Second, in the context of a broad and diverse World Congress, we have sought to guarantee a significant presence of Latin American and of course Chilean political scientists. The Congress's central theme forces us to review our situation and our insertion in the world. At the same time, it points towards a real universalization of political science as an acceptance that different theoretical and empirical problematiques are in permanent dialogue, where Chilean and Latin American political science seeks to present itself to the world. This has been the driving force behind our effort to ensure that colleagues from around the region were able to come to Santiago, by contacting national associations and mobilizing the regional community. This has been translated into the granting of over 130 full or partial grants for academics and students from around the region, financed by the Chilean National Research Council, CONICYT, the Ford Foundation, and the Embassy of France. As a result, about 37% of attendees at this Congress come from the countries of Latin America, and the panels and LOC sessions represent 29% of the total sessions. This is unprecedented in the history of World Congresses and represents an encouraging milestone for the future.

Third, a word about the Congress' theme. It is perhaps ironic that several years ago, when the theme was first proposed, the concept of global discontent seemed to us to be, frankly, not particularly novel. We live, after all, in the region which for decades has suffered with problems of governability, representation, poverty, violence and income inequality. Yet it seems that over these past three years, as global economic, political and security conditions have worsened, the rest of the world has, unfortunately, joined our region in expressing discontent on many levels. This has only served to strengthen our assertion that certain dimensions of dominant approaches towards globalization, which had concentrated on the positive aspects of this phenomenon, must be critically examined. The global financial crisis has proven the critics to be right. It has shown the theoretical irresponsibility of many intellectuals, economists and technocrats who have been defenders of a model which has collapsed, and the enormous practical irresponsibility of dominant economic sectors, specially, but also of States and international institutions which have abandoned their regulatory mission

The theme of global discontent has therefore returned to the front lines and presents the academic and intellectual world with a new challenge – not only to understand and criticize but also to consider a new order at the national, supranational and global levels. The theme of democracy has gained new meaning: control of economic forces by people, be the citizens or other political actors. In a word, the primacy of the political. In the case of Latin America, with the completion of democratic transitions, nations face the task of reconstructing their states and their relation with society at large. This must be done through a dialogue between the academic sphere –thinking and researching the political – and political actors themselves. And it must be done while recognizing the autonomy of the actors involved, but demanding certain thresholds of understanding, dialogue and compromise. For this reason, in organizing the LOC sessions, we have made a special effort to promote this dialogue. And perhaps, the best example of this spirit will be exhibited in just a short while, as we engage in conversation and debate with former heads of government, Lionel Jospin and Ricardo Lagos, and the special session to be held tomorrow, where President Michelle Bachelet will offer a lecture on citizenship and social protection.

My friends, three years ago, thanks to the pioneering efforts of María de los Ángeles Fernández and the perseverance of Jorge Heine, it was determined that the XXI World Congress of Political Science would be held here in Santiago. The Chilean Political Science Association then took on this enormous challenge, and charged the Local Organizing Committee, with I have the honour of presiding, with the task of organizing the Congress along lines set by IPSA. Our first responsibility was to acquire the support of the Government of Chile, the academic community, the country's principal universities, the private sector, and the media, with the objective of transforming what was a specific challenge of a small community into a collaborative project for the entire country. We were very conscious of the fact that this congress is taking place at a time when Chile, as well as other Latin America countries, are about to celebrate their bicentenaries.

To all these sectors – government, universities (in particular the University of Chile and the Catholic University of Chile for the infrastructure and administrative support offered), the private sector, the media, whose names are found in official Congress

material – we express our infinite appreciation. Without them this congress would not have been possible.

To the Local Organizing Committee, and its Executive and Administrative Secretariat, my most heartfelt affection and gratitude. The success of this Congress belongs to them.

Finally, allow me to speak from the heart. Organizing a World Congress in one particular discipline is one of the greatest honours that a group of academics can be granted in their careers. From the first moment we have felt this way. We, and especially I, must thank you all for this marvelous opportunity to have worked tirelessly to get to this point, where we can say to you, welcome to Chile!

Thank you very much.