

CalChamber Luncheon Speakers Spotlight Trade Partnership Opportunities with Chile

As a global leader in multiple areas, California can provide Chile with opportunities for innovation, education and economic growth, Ambassador Fernando Schmidt, Chile's undersecretary for foreign affairs, told guests at the California Chamber of Commerce International Luncheon on April 14.

Chilean Ambassador to the United States Arturo Ferandois joined Ambassador Schmidt in expressing hopes for a successful Chile-California partnership.

Luncheon guests included Assemblymember Henry Perea (D-Fresno) and Assemblymember Joan Buchanan (D-Alamo).

Partnership Plan

Ambassador Schmidt recalled former Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown envisioning a Chile-California partnership in the 1960s. The ambassador listened as a child to tales of California and "the different places and marvels that adorned [the] famous state."

The Chile-California Plan was formed in June 2008 when then-Chile President Michelle Bachelet Jeria signed a memorandum of understanding with former

Photos by Megan Wood



Chilean Ambassador to the United States Arturo Ferandois

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. That ceremony marked the start of a program called "Chile-California Plan: A Strategic Association for the 21st Century."

The association is based on the joint commitment of Chile and California to



Chilean Ambassador and Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Fernando Schmidt

develop business opportunities, expand research and teaching in education, and develop projects in different areas that are strategic for both territories: human capital, education in environmental issues,

See CalChamber: Page 7

Chile-California Council Holds First Working Session

The Chile-California Council met in San Francisco on April 16 for its first working session.

The 25 individuals on the council are from Chile and California representing business, government, academia, the arts, education and science.

The all-day session was opened by Ambassador Fernando Schmidt, Chile's undersecretary for foreign affairs, and the Chilean Ambassador to the United States, Arturo Ferandois. Agustin Huneeus of Quintessa Winery serves as council chair. Susanne Stirling, California Chamber of Commerce vice president of international affairs, also is a council member.

Chile and California have rich



histories and much in common. They share anecdotes of fortune and poverty caused by the Gold Rush. They are natural partners due to geographical similarities, reverse agricultural seasons, and location along the Pacific Rim.

A shared history of cooperation has existed since the 1960s and 1970s within the framework of the Alliance for Progress initiated by the United States. Replacing the assistance model with partnership, both have launched

the plan: Chile-California, a strategic association for the 21st Century.

The three key initiatives are development of human capital, increase in trade and investment opportunities, and promotion of research and development.

The most effective areas for cooperation will be: renewable energies, entrepreneurship and innovation, seismology, astronomy, information technologies, biotechnology, education, culture, agriculture, green initiatives, tourism, motion picture industry, water resource management, infrastructure, and scholarships for internships and college/ university studies.

CalChamber Luncheon Speakers Spotlight Trade Opportunities with Chile

From Page 5

energy, agriculture, information and communications technologies, and trade.

The plan implies opportunity, Ambassador Schmidt said. Chile is expected to grow 7 percent in 2011 and already holds trade agreements with some of the most important economic partners in the world, including Australia, the European Union, Korea and China. What Chile can offer California is conditions for economic growth: an educated workforce and a better environment for doing business, he said.

Country Development

Chile, however, encounters several problems with which California can lend aid, said Ambassador Schmidt.

“[Chile] needs to overcome the present

difficulties...We face still a society with social imbalances, lack of...an equal society, lack of access to education and so on. In this regard, we need California—California’s creativity,” Ambassador Schmidt said.

California is a leader and is unique on the world stage, and a partnership will bring the Californian entrepreneurship to Chile, Ambassador Schmidt added. The partnership will promote trade and investment, but more crucially, it will bring science, joint research, and technology to Chile.

Moreover, these advancements will allow Chile to diverge from primarily exporting commodities to exporting more sophisticated products in a way that will benefit both Chile and California, Ambassador Schmidt said.

Trade Overview

Since the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement was implemented in January 2004, bilateral trade between Chile and the U.S. has doubled. Chile has the most stable and fastest growing economy in the region, with renowned copper mines and a population of 17 million people.

According to the American Chamber of Commerce in Chile, more than 300 U.S. companies have investments in Chile, with more than 40 of them using Chile as a platform for services in the region. Chilean affiliates of U.S. direct investors are estimated to employ more than 58,500 people and their value-added contributed 3.2 percent to Chile’s gross domestic product.

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