

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PLEBISCITE OF OCTOBER 2020 FOR THE REPUBLIC OF CHILE

(Courtesy translation from Spanish original)

Chile's constitutional history, like that of many Latin American nations, shows that its changes and revisions have been preceded by serious political tensions and social protests accompanied by violence. Thus, the conservative Constitution of 1833, the first of these, appeared after the defeat of the liberal side in the civil war of 1830. The 1925 Constitution, in turn, is the result of military pressure on the government and several massacres committed by the state against the social protest that was emerging in those years.

Today we invite you to accompany the birth of a political process that marks the end of the current Constitution, which was born in 1980 during the Pinochet dictatorship and "approved" in a fraudulent plebiscite that same year, which had no electoral records, no space for propaganda, and which also took place in a context of outlawing any dissidence and the greatest political violence.

October 5, 1988 marked the beginning of a virtuous cycle in Chilean democracy, as the plebiscite was agreed upon as a way out of the dictatorship. Chile, through massive and strengthened participation, believed and overcame fear to say NO to Pinochet, and open the way to democracy. The process we began as a country on October 25 is exceptional because it is the expression of the massive social demonstrations unleashed in Chile since October 2019, which brought millions of people to the streets because of the accumulation of unrest and uncertainty reflected in the rejection of the rise in public transport fares. These massive expressions of citizen discontent acted as a telluric movement, which removed the foundations of our political system, shaking up the institutionalism inherited from the constitution of the dictatorship.

Today the task of Chilean democracy is to build a new constitution together through a participatory process that defines a new balance of power and establishes the basis for a social, fair, democratic, participatory, dignified and environmentally friendly system.

On October 25, 2020, Chileans will have to vote "Approval" or "Rejection" of the idea of a New Political State Constitution, and choose between two bodies responsible for drafting it: the "Mixed Constitutional Convention," composed in part of conventions elected solely for that purpose and of sitting parliamentarians, and the "Constitutional Convention," composed entirely of elected citizens.

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The progressive forces in Chile, especially the parties that represent the Socialist Party of Chile, the Radical Party and the Party for Democracy, want to contribute to a new Chile and we take as our definition the option of APPROVAL and a Constitutional Convention. We believe that this body best represents the desires for democracy, change and full participation that citizens demand. It will also be the first constitution drawn up by a gender parity body, and we may be able to appoint ecaños (indigenous women).

If what we all hope for happens in the plebiscite, we will be able to witness and play a leading role in the history of our country, in which not only will the people enter through the wide door of democracy, but we will also be able to discuss those enclaves inherited from the Pinochet movement which prevent fair and harmonious development in the country. Some of these are the supra-constitutional and discretionary powers of the Constitutional Court as well as private ownership of water, to mention a few internationally known topics. We will be able to discuss the notion of the Social and Democratic State of Rights and the principles that derive from it, very much in line with what has sounded strongly among citizens' demands.

We know that Chile will rise to the occasion and we want to share it with the progressives of the world.

Santiago de Chile, October 15, 2020