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Joint Communique of the United States-Chile Environment Affairs Council and Joint Commission for Environmental Cooperation

BUREAU OF OCEANS AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS
August 13, 2015

On August 13, 2015, the United States and Chile held the seventh meeting of the Environment Affairs Council (EAC) under the United States-Chile Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the fifth meeting of the Joint Commission for Environmental Cooperation (JCEC) under the United States-Chile Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA).

The meetings were chaired by Ambassador Judith G. Garber, U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, and Jennifer Prescott, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Environment and Natural Resources, Office of the United States Trade Representative, for the United States. Waldemar Coutts, Director of Environment and Maritime Affairs in the Chile Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Angelica Romero, Head of Energy, Trade, and Sustainable Development in the Directorate of International Economic Relations at the Chile Ministry of Foreign Affairs co-chaired the meetings for Chile.

The EAC reviewed the progress the two governments have made in implementing the obligations in the Environment Chapter of the FTA, including obligations to: (1) establish high levels of environmental protection; (2) effectively enforce environmental laws and regulations; and (3) provide opportunities for public participation with respect to the implementation of the Environment Chapter.

The United States reported, among other things, on actions taken to improve U.S. levels of environmental protection, such as the adoption and implementation of National Strategies on Combating Wildlife Trafficking and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, the establishment of new protected areas including the world's largest marine sanctuary, and the promulgation of stronger regulations on air quality and automobile emissions. The United States also reported on environmental law enforcement actions by the Department of Justice and other U.S. agencies, and on efforts to increase public participation.

Chile presented its work to improve levels of environmental protection, such as a review of air quality and emissions standards; the adoption of six environmental quality standards protecting surface waters; the implementation of tools to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated Fishing, and the establishment of requirements for the protection of seamounts, which are considered vulnerable marine ecosystems. Chile also reported on actions related to the enforcement of environmental law by the Environment Superintendency. Additionally, Chile reported on its efforts to improve public participation and actions to promote corporate social responsibility.

The JCEC considered environmental cooperation projects completed under the fourth Work Program for 2012-2014 and the status of ongoing and upcoming environmental cooperation projects. Chilean and United States agencies participating in the meeting reported on some of the activities carried out during the Work Program period, activities that have achieved results such as strengthening natural resource policies involving more than 22 million hectares of national parks and private lands; expanding cooperation in the region; and training over 2,700 people in natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and environmental enforcement.

The JCEC also approved the fifth Work Program for 2015-2017, which establishes the following priorities for cooperative activities: strengthening effective implementation and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations; promoting conservation and inclusive management of natural resources, including biodiversity and

ecosystem services, protected wild areas and other ecologically important ecosystems; promoting environmental education, transparency, and civil society participation in environmental decision-making and enforcement; and encouraging development of low emissions technology, improving resilience to large-scale disasters, and encouraging the adoption of sound environmental practices and technologies.

The EAC and the JCEC also held a public session, which included participation from a variety of stakeholders. The public session reflects both countries' commitment to maintaining an open and participatory process. The session provided an opportunity for members of the public to participate in a discussion with government officials about implementation of the FTA Environment Chapter and ongoing and future environmental cooperation, and to offer comments and ask questions, both in person and via social media.

Finally, the United States and Chile signed the 2015-2017 Work Program for Environmental Cooperation and reaffirmed their commitment to continue working together to preserve and protect the environment through the FTA Environment Chapter and the Environmental Cooperation Agreement.

The U.S. delegation included officials from the Department of State, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Justice, the National Parks Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Forest Service. For Chile, officials participated from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the Directorate for Environment and Maritime Affairs and the Directorate for International Economic Relations), the Ministry of Environment, and the Environment Superintendency. The Chilean Embassy in the United States also participated.