

Chilean President to Change Electoral Law Inherited from Dictatorship



Santiago de Chile, 23 April (PL - RHC)- Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, signed today a proposal to change the current binomial electoral system inherited from the dictatorship, which was called a thorn in the middle of the national democracy.

"The binomial system is a thorn in the heart of our democracy. It is a system that owes its life to the dictatorship (1973-1990) and is perpetuated through exclusion," the president stated at a ceremony at the O'Higgins Hall in La Moneda Palace.

The government proposal suggests replacing the current system by a proportional and inclusive system which would raise the number of MPs from 120 to 154, and senators from 38 to 50.

In this regard, the Head of State, who is completing her second presidential term (the first in 2006-10) considered that the increase in representatives is not a triumph for bureaucracy, but a victory for the future of Chile.

She added that the new system would establish a proportional relationship

between the inhabitants of the territories and parliamentarians chosen, as "it is not possible that the least populated areas choose the same number of legislators as the most populous."

This would keep equal territorial criteria but correct the under-representation of the most populous regions, said Bachelet, reporting that the current 60 districts would be reorganized into 28 and they would select three to eight members depending on the number of voters.

Another change included in the text, refers to gender equity in the two parliamentary chambers, it includes a quota law under which no party may submit more than 60 percent of candidates of the same sex.

According to the president, this guarantees at least 40 percent female representation on electoral lists.

To receive final approval, the government proposal must obtain the support of at least 23 senators and 72 deputies.

Referring to the new system, the Interior Minister Rodrigo Peñailillo, today considered that this is a transformative project that will give space and accommodate all ideas.

"It can not be that we continue electing our Parliament with an evil system that everyone knows has done much damage to Chilean democracy," he said.

Repeated reviews indicate that the binomial scheme is a system imposed by the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet to ensure permanence and parliamentary supremacy forces and hinder the advancement of minority or emerging political groups.

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