

Chilean President Seeks Change in Pinochet-Era Labor Code



Santiago de Chile, December 30 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Chile's President Michelle Bachelet presented new legislation Monday which seeks to reform the labor code that has been limiting workers' rights since the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

"Today we are marking a new milestone, building the country that we wish; we are clearing a debt that we have held toward the workers of Chile," declared the President.

The legislation will be debated in the Congress in the first days of January, according to official sources.

"In a democratic society, [economic] growth and equity need to go hand in hand in order to ensure a future of prosperity, but also of legitimacy and social cohesion," she stated.

The legislation includes various measures empowering workers such as strengthening unions, increasing collective negotiations, and ending the practice of replacing workers on strikes (referred to as scabs).

Bachelet also mentioned fair remuneration, work security, training, protection in case of

unemployment, fairer work relations with employers and simplification of collective negotiation.

Union leaders, including President Barbara Figueroa of the Unitarian Workers Central (CUT), welcomed the reform, calling it as "an enormous step toward social equality."

"Today we are opening the door to the effective recovery of workers' rights, but after this step, there are many more issues that we will need to discuss, which are not only restricted to work code's matters, but require a constitutional reform," said Figueroa.

Bachelet promised to start debating such a reform in 2015.



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