

Ricardo Lagos

Former President of Chile; tenacious fighter for democracy and human rights; implemented health reform; and reduced economic inequality while diversifying Chile's external trade in the era of globalisation.

- President of Chile 2000-2006
- UN Special Envoy on Climate Change (2007-10)
- Commissioner for the WHO's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health
- Commissioner for the Global Commission on Drug Policy
- Professor-at-large on International Relations at Brown University, US (2008-15)

"Our world faces many grave problems that require us to join hands and share our different experiences. I hope that by adding my voice to those of my fellow Elders we can also ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable in our societies do not go overlooked."

President of Chile

Ricardo Lagos was elected President of Chile in 2000, twelve years after helping to lead his country back to democracy after the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. His memorable intervention on live television in 1988, challenging General Pinochet's attempt to extend his rule by nationwide plebiscite, was seen as a pivotal moment in Chile's transition.

He served as President for six years for the centre-left *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia* coalition, championing reforms to the healthcare system, enacting free-trade agreements whilst reducing economic inequality.

Supporting democracy

After leaving office, Ricardo Lagos established the [Fundación Democracia y Desarrollo](#), a Santiago-based foundation, to promote democracy and development. He also served two years as President of the [Club de Madrid](#), a group of global leaders working on governance and conflict issues, and remains a member of the organisation.

Background

After a career in academia and diplomacy, the military coup of 1973 forced Ricardo Lagos into exile where he remained until the late 1970s. He then tenaciously led efforts to restore democracy to the country, which ultimately led to the resignation of General Pinochet and the restoration of civilian rule. He later served as Minister for Education, and Minister for Public Works in the mid-1990s under Presidents Patricio Aylwin and Eduardo Frei , before being elected President in 2000. He finished his Presidential term with historically-high approval ratings above 70 percent. He was ineligible to run for a second term because of the single-term provision of the Chilean Constitution.