

Venezuelan Protest Impedes MERCOSUR Summit in Caracas



Montevideo, May 20 (NNN-RHC) -- Uruguay Foreign Minister Luis Almagro said that the political situation in Venezuela makes it quite improbable that the three-times postponed and since delayed MERCOSUR summit can effectively take place in Caracas sometime in the next two months.

Almagro said: "The summit has been postponed several times and at this moment we are in an impasse, mainly because of the situation in Venezuela; we were hopeful that the peace dialogue in Venezuela would establish the necessary conditions which would allow the summit to take place as soon as possible."

Venezuela currently holds the rotating chair of MERCOSUR and this would be the first summit hosted by Venezuela, that only in 2012 became a full member of the trade group.

MERCOSUR has several pending issues among which the most significant are discussions for a trade and cooperation agreement with the European Union, with negotiations resumed in 2010 after several years suspension.

Over the weekend, the Paraguayan foreign ministry had reported that the presidential summit would take place in Caracas despite the serious political and economic crisis which Venezuela is undergoing: the only factor on which the event will depend this time is the agenda of the different presidents, according to

Paraguayan diplomats.

The 'presidential agendas' impediment in reality is a delicate diplomatic way of referring to the deep differences between the majority of the group with Argentina, relative to the common proposal to be elaborated and exchanged with the European Union to achieve an ambitious trade and cooperation agreement that has been delayed since 1999.

Argentina has been reluctant to lower tariffs that could impact jobs and its industrialization process, while Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay strongly favor an understanding to lower tariffs and promote trade.

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