
New UNASUR Head Vows to Build Peace in South America

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Ernesto Samper, the new General Secretary of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) [gave an exclusive interview with teleSUR's William Parra](#) on Thursday addressing key regional issues and the continent's role in world affairs

During the 20 minute interview, the former Colombian president reiterated his commitment to building a conflict-free region. "Our region must be a region of peace," he told Parra.

He explained how UNASUR, a new institution launched in 2008, was initiated on the basis of constructing dialogue and cooperation against those who wanted to sow conflict in the region.

"UNASUR was born as an answer to an attempt to activate a military intervention in the region, and has since been consolidating as a true oasis...in a world that is sparked in violence, here we have a region of relative calmness," he said, referring to the fact that the institution was born after former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe ordered an illegal military operation on Ecuadorian soil, a move which threatened to escalate into a military conflict.

"Here we will not solve our conflicts through killing each other, but by working on social welfare programs," Samper stated.

However he expressed concern about a different dynamic in world affairs, responding to a question on President Obama's widening of the war drive in the Middle east, and referring to ongoing tensions surrounding events in the Ukraine, Samper warned that, "we have not been able to overcome the hole in which we have been for over 50 years, and we're still in a Cold War logic"

One important difference with that era, when the U.S. directly and indirectly intervened across the world, was in Latin America. Speaking on the anniversary of the US backed ousting of President Allende in Chile he reminded the viewer said "For many years, our relationship was a conflictual one" with the U.S. However today the fact that "the United States is dealing with other regions of the world is good in the sense that they are not focused on Latin America"

Addressing regional matters, Samper promised UNASUR would help in any way requested by the parties involved in the Colombian peace negotiations in Havana.

"The decisions will be taken in the negotiating table in Havana. We are willing to help in whatever is necessary" he said.

He was confident of an agreement being reached, but he also pointed out that signing any accord will only be the first step. "I'm very sure that the peace agreement will be signed. But by this we will only achieve a negative peace, which means the end of the armed conflict. From there on we will have to build that big building which is peace".

Samper manifested his solidarity with the Argentinean government in its struggle against vulture funds and its efforts to restructure its foreign debt, a measure which he said is a right of any sovereign country.

He also explained that UNASUR will continue to try to aid the attempts by President Maduro in Venezuela to establish a national dialogue, after extreme right wing groups initiated a wave of violence earlier this year that left over 40 people dead.
