

# *Former Uruguayan president Pepe Mujica says nothing more important than Latin American integration*

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Montevideo, June 8 (RHC)-- Uruguay's former president and current senator Jose Mujica has urged Latin American leaders to work immediately and aggressively to promote regional integration. Speaking during a conference organized by the Movement for Popular Participation, part of Uruguay's government coalition, Mujica said great demonstrations of support for regional integration may never happen but insisted that "there is nothing more important."

He also highlighted that "although the principle of self-determination must be upheld" it is necessary to acknowledge the transnational dimensions of world powers like China, India, and Europe. "Until now attempts at integration have had a fundamentally commercial character, which while important, is not the only thing. We haven't concerned ourselves with integrating Latin American knowledge and universities," Mujica said.

Mujica's comments on regional integration come amid a regional diplomatic crisis that threatens the Union

of South American Nations (UNASUR), the only South American integration body with no United States or Canadian presence. UNASUR entered a prolonged impasse in late April when six countries, all belonging to the United States aligned-Lima Group, announced they were temporarily withdrawing from UNASUR.

According to a joint letter sent to Bolivia, which holds the pro-tempore presidency of UNASUR, the withdrawal was a response to the incapacity of UNASUR countries to choose a secretary general since early 2017 when former Colombian President Ernesto Samper ended his term.

In recent statements, Samper has urged the countries' leadership to overcome political differences and strengthen regional integration to face the U.S. administration's growing influence within the region.

Uruguay is among the six countries which have remained as active members of the South American integration organization.

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