

# *President Lula da Silva proposes to advance the integration of South America*

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Brasilia, May 30 (RHC)-- The president of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, opened Tuesday the summit of South American leaders with a speech in which he stressed the importance of regional integration for "strengthening unity."

"I have the firm conviction that we need to strengthen our commitment to the region," assured Lula, who considered that "the integration of South America depends on the feeling of remaining to the same community."

The Brazilian leader said that the elements that unite the region "are above ideologies". "No country can face the current threats in isolation," he warned.

The Brazilian president called for overcoming ideological differences that affect the will for integration, when inaugurating in this capital the summit of leaders of South American countries.

"In the region, we let ideologies divide us and interrupt the integration effort. We abandoned channels of dialogue and cooperation mechanisms and, with that, we all lose, Lula declared before 11 leaders gathered behind closed doors at the Itamaraty Palace, headquarters of the foreign ministry in Brasilia.

Lula mentioned the "deep marks" left by the coronavirus pandemic and the danger of hate speech on social networks.

"From Patagonia and Atacama to the Amazon, from the Cerrado and from the Andes to the Caribbean, we are a vast continent bathed by two oceans. We are a human, historical and cultural, economic and commercial entity, with common needs and hopes," he said.

Lula highlighted his country's willingness to resume regional integration instruments, such as the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Celac).

"South America has before it, once again, the opportunity to walk the path of union. And I do not need to start from scratch," he said.

The host president also suggested a series of proposals for the development of South America, such as investments in infrastructure and development projects, in the fight against climate change, in vaccination coverage, in the constitution of an energy market, in academic mobility programs, and in the area of defense.

Lula proposed the creation of a "high level group", formed by representatives of the presidents, to prepare within 120 days a new "road map for the integration of South America".

He highlighted some of the points to be discussed with the South American presidents: - 1) - To put economic reserves at the service of regional development. 2) - To deepen the regional economic identity in order to reduce dependence on foreign currencies.

3) - To expand cooperation in services, investments, electronic products. 4) - To update the plan of the South American Council of Infrastructure. 5).- To develop actions against climate change. 6) - Reactivate the South American Institute of Government in Health (ISAGS/Unasur).

The summit is being attended by the presidents of Argentina, Alberto Fernández; Bolivia, Luis Arce; Chile, Gabriel Boric; Colombia, Gustavo Petro; Ecuador, Guillermo Lasso; Guyana, Irfaan Ali; Paraguay, Mario Abdo Benítez; Suriname, Chan Santokhi; Uruguay, Luis Lacalle Pou; and Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro. Peru is represented by the President of the Council of Ministers, Alberto Otárola.



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