

# *Lula assumes presidency of MERCOSUR at summit in Argentina*

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Puerto Iguazú, July 4 (Prensa Latina)-- Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has assumed the command of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), at the 62nd Summit of MERCOSUR and associated countries, underway in the Argentinean city of Puerto Iguazú.

Lula received the pro tempore presidency of MERCOSUR (formed by Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay) for six months from his Argentinean counterpart, Alberto Fernandez.

Journalistic sources assure that during the period in which the Brazilian ruler will occupy the post, expectations will be centered on the Mercosur-European Union (EU) agreement.

In spite of being of extreme interest for the South American alliance, in his last visit to Europe, more precisely to France, where he participated in the Power Our Planet event and the Summit for a New Global Financial Pact, Lula alluded to devices that foresee sanctions, considered harsh by the Brazilian government if they are not complied with.

"I am dying to reach an agreement with the European Union. But it is not possible. The additional letter made by the European Union does not allow an agreement to be made. We will come up with the answer, and we will send you the answer, but we need to start discussing." Lula made the comments sitting next to the French president, Emmanuel Macron.

The Brazilian leader insisted that "it is not possible for us to have a strategic partnership, and there is an additional letter that makes a threat to a strategic partner." The agreement between the two blocs has been negotiated since 1999. In 2019, the commercial ones were finalized and two years later those related to political and cooperation aspects.

Since then, the pact has been under review for signature, but the environmental policy during the administration of former president Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022), which resulted in an increase in deforestation, hindered the negotiation.

According to the Secretary of Economic and Financial Affairs of the Foreign Ministry, Maurício Carvalho, the Government is already in the conclusion phase on points of the commitment to be presented at the Iguazú forum and, subsequently, to be taken to the European bloc.

Other latent Mercosur agreements include the agreement with the European Free Trade Association comprising Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Similarly, negotiations with Singapore, Canada, Indonesia and Vietnam, common strategies with the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, the implementation of Chile and Colombia into the bloc, as well as the conclusion of Bolivia's accession.

In addition to MERCOSUR, the South American giant will lead the G-20 (which brings together the world's main economies) and the United Nations Security Council in the second half of the year.

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