

# *Argentina Says MERCOSUR Summit Helps Ratify Direction*

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Buenos Aires, December 19 (RHC-Xinhua) -- A recent MERCOSUR leaders' summit in Argentina's Entre Rios Province has served to ratify the direction in which the trade bloc will head, Provincial Governor Sergio Urribarri said Thursday.

The gathering of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) heads of state, including the presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, took place on Wednesday in the provincial capital of Parana.

During the summit, the leaders stressed the importance of opening the bloc to China, and celebrated the restoration of Cuba-U.S. ties, which was also announced on Wednesday. The event saw "the ratification of the direction of the policies of the region," Urribarri told local radio stations.

The governor, who has close ties to the administration of President Cristina Fernandez and aspires to succeed her in 2015, said bloc members also ratified their support for Argentina in its territorial dispute with Britain over the Malvinas Islands, known to the British as the Falkland Islands.

Other issues discussed at the summit included a call for overhauling the existing model of national debt restructuring, a problem that particularly plagued Argentina this year; promoting the free flow of people among bloc members; and the incorporation of Bolivia as a full member.

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