

# *UNASUR Calls on Venezuela and Colombia to Maintain Good Relations*

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Bogotá, January 28 (RHC-teleSUR) -- The Secretary-General of UNASUR, Ernesto Samper, called on the presidents of Colombia and Venezuela to maintain a positive working relationship between their two countries. Samper, who is also former President of Colombia, made the statement Tuesday in light of a sharp diplomatic disagreement between the neighboring countries, which Venezuela warned could “set back bilateral relations.”

“I invite Presidents Juan Manuel Santos and Nicolas Maduro to preserve the productive climate of cordiality and understanding that has characterized their bilateral relations over the last few years. (In particular) in this moment where important topics are at hand such as the international drop in the price of oil and its impact on the social aspect of the Venezuelan economy, as well as the peace negotiations in Colombia, which are finally arriving at a positive outcome,” said Samper via his twitter account.

This diplomatic dust-up was triggered by provocative comments made by former Colombian President Andres Pastrana, who

was visiting Venezuela to participate in a forum organized by the right-wing opposition in that country. Pastrana inserted himself into the discussion surrounding the imprisonment of far-right opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez.

Further complicating the issue, the Colombian Foreign Minister, Maria Angela Holguin, backed Pastrana's comments. Venezuelan President Maduro stated that he “lamented that the foreign ministry of the government of Juan Manuel Santos had fallen victim to provocation,” adding that he would not tolerate her interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela.

Venezuela and Colombia have enjoyed a period of positive relations over the last few years after a long period of strained relations between the left-wing government of late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez

and far-right former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe.

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