

# *Union of South American Nations Calls for Lifting of Blockade against Cuba*

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Quito, February 9 (RHC) — The general secretary of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), Ernesto Samper, said that the lifting of U.S. sanctions on Cuba and the shutting down of the U.S. naval base in Cuban territory of Guantanamo are issues to consider for a normalization of relations between Washington and Havana.

Both governments have taken an historic step by opening negotiations to re-establish diplomatic relations, but we cannot forget the big issues to be addressed: the blockade and the Guantanamo Base, Samper told the Catalonina daily Gara on Sunday.

On December 17th, Cuba and the United States announced a bilateral rapprochement after more than fifty years without diplomatic relations and with a reinforced U.S. blockade against the island, which is still in force and it can only be lifted with the approval of the U.S. Congress.

Samper also expressed optimism about the Colombian peace talks underway in Havana between the Revolutionary Armed Forces, FARC-EP, and the Colombian government.

Since November 2012, the two parties have been negotiating a peace agenda to put an end to the over 50-year armed conflict in Colombia, which has left over 220,000 fatal victims, mostly civilians, and some 5.3 million displaced.

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