

# *UNASUR Calls for Direct U.S.- Venezuela Dialogue*

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Montevideo, February 10 (RHC-EFE)-- Foreign ministers from the Union of South American Nations, UNASUR, said on Monday they will seek to promote a direct dialogue between Venezuela and the United States amid Washington's escalating sanctions against Caracas.

The announcement came out of a meeting in Uruguay of UNASUR Secretary-General Ernesto Samper and foreign ministers Mauro Viera of Brazil, Delcy Rodriguez of Venezuela and Ricardo Patiño of Ecuador.

The participants discussed the measures adopted in recent days by the U.S. government, including sanctions against Venezuelan officials and their effects on regional peace, Patiño told a press conference. "The measures to be implemented warrant an immediate reaction from UNASUR and that is why we met and we hope our actions will promote peace, concord and dialogue, and not just among the UNASUR members, but also to prevent countries outside the region from disturbing peace and stability in our countries," Patiño said.

President Barack Obama signed into law a bill passed by the U.S. Congress imposing travel and financial sanctions against individual Venezuelan officials for alleged human rights abuses in connection with anti-government protests in early 2014 that left some 40 people dead, including both supporters and opponents of President Nicolas Maduro.

The Montevideo meeting came a few days after the Venezuelan head of state asked UNASUR and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean Countries, CELAC, to establish “a protective shield” around his country to “avert aggression.”

“The UNASUR commission and its secretary-general will continue contributing to the strengthening of the democratic process and dialogue in Venezuela,” Patiño said after Monday’s session.

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