

# *Ecuador Considering Withdrawal from Andean Community of Nations*

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Guayaquil, February 12 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Ecuador is seriously considering leaving the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) bloc, President Rafael Correa told press Wednesday.

The announcement came days after the CAN decided to eliminate Ecuador's trade safeguards, which protect national industry against currency devaluation.

Ecuador maintains that it is outside the jurisdiction of the CAN to eliminate the safeguards of 21 percent on Colombian goods and 7 percent on Peru, which were protectionist measures against devaluation, and implemented on January 5th.

Speaking to the press in Guayaquil, President Correa said, "We have to seriously reflect about if our continuation in the Community is worthwhile, it was beaten to death with the signing of the free trade agreement of the United States with Colombia and Peru and in these cases the Secretary, in this case it is not the Secretariat, has acted beyond their powers."

The Secretary of the CAN, Pablo Guzman, has been criticized over the decision, which Ecuador maintains exceeds his post and violates the Cartagena Agreement, which says that the regional organization is only able to make recommendations on measures such as exchange safeguards.

The CAN has been criticized for the signing of a free trade agreement between member-states and the United States in 2005. Following the signing, former President of Venezuela Hugo Chavez proclaimed the organization was “dead” and “works to the benefit of transnationals over small-scale producers.”

The signing of the free trade agreement was a decision that in part led to Venezuela's withdrawal from the organization, which currently includes Peru, Bolivia and Colombia, as well as Ecuador.

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