

Foreign Ministers Lay Out Latin America's Priorities



Quito, March 24 (teleSUR-RHC) The foreign ministers of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador met in Quito on Monday to discuss planning for the regional body.

Ecuador holds the pro tempore presidency of the 33 nation Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Celac) for 2015.

High on the agenda was the regional bodies strategies for increasing international partnerships over the next five years. Celac is looking to strengthen relationships with the European Union, China, Russia and India, among other countries.

Ricardo Patino, foreign minister of Ecuador, told press, "We will discuss planning for the body until 2020...to see where we are in agreement and what we need to later propose. We will define the policies of the next summits of Celac, the European Union-Celac summit this year, and we will also discuss the relationship of Celac with other countries and their advancement."

Celac has been functioning since 2011, and like UNASUR and ALBA is aimed at strengthening regional integration. Representing nearly 600 million people of Latin America and the Caribbean, the foreign ministers present at the meeting analyzed the objectives proposed by Ecuador over the next five year period.

Goals include reducing extreme poverty and inequality, providing greater support to educational, scientific and technological initiatives, increasing efforts to protect the environment and combat climate change; and greater investment to infrastructure development.

Ecuador is "looking for these opportunities to unite the 33 very diverse member states of Celac," said Foreign Minister of Costa Rica Manuel Gonzalez. Present at the meeting were representatives of the Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean, eager to discuss possibilities for cooperation with the regional body.

On his country's stance in the body, Foreign Minister of the Dominican Republic Andres Navarro said, "The Dominican Republic has a lot of expectations for the pro tempore presidency that Ecuador holds, ...as you have seen, Celac is an extraordinary experience of integration, of all our people of Latin America and the Caribbean."

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