

# *Former Colombian president says dismantling UNASUR would be an 'historical error'*

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Bogota, May 24 (RHC)-- Ernesto Samper, the former secretary general of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), has warned that allowing the regional integration body to be dismantled or disappear would be an “historical error,” and would “weaken our countries when it is most needed to face the threats to the region and the world since the foolish Donald Trump presides over the United States.”

UNASUR entered a prolonged impasse in late April when six countries, all belonging to the United States aligned "Lima Group," announced they were temporarily withdrawing from the South American integration body.

According to a joint letter sent to Bolivia, which holds the pro-tempore presidency of UNASUR the withdrawal was a response to the incapacity of UNASUR member countries to choose a secretary general since early 2017 when Samper, a former Colombian president, ended his term.

In an op-ed written for EFE, Samper detailed U.S. policies that threaten the region and said destroying UNASUR will be akin to suicide. “Trump’s ‘axe of war’ contemplates the expulsion of Latino migrants who have lived in the United States for years; the construction of divisive walls in the border with Mexico; non-

compliance with environmental regulation, that due to global warming increases the risk of natural disasters in the Caribbean; increasing taxes for our key exports; or questioning Colombia's peace accords," Samper explains.

"To disregard the joint response to such challenges is like jumping overboard when the storm rages," Samper said. Despite the formal justification, some fear the intention is to dismantle Unasur. In a previous interview, Samper acknowledged the United States would prefer to have the Organization of American States as the only regional body.

The creation of UNASUR did not only represent a regional body that excluded the U.S., but it also challenged U.S. military hegemony in the region. The South American Defense Council "reiterated its commitment against foreign military bases in South America when former president Alvaro Uribe authorized the presence of several bases in the border between Colombia and Venezuela. Its implementation could've taken us to the brink of unseen levels of hemispheric conflict" Samper explained.

After presenting other UNASUR accomplishments in the fields of migration, health, and education, Samper warned: "Lowering our guard against what has been achieved over the years, transforming what is now a space of integration into a field of controversy would be, as well as unforgivable, a serious historical error."

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