Written by Elaine Patricia Cruz
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Brazil and Argentina have decided: the upcoming April Summit of the Americas in Colombia must be the very last that Cuba does not participate in, declared Hector Timerman, the Argentine Foreign Minister, following a meeting in São Paulo with Antonio Patriota, the Brazilian Foreign Minister.

"Cuba needs to be a part of the Summit of the Americas simply because it is supposed to be a Summit of the Americas," added Timerman.

Patriota went on to say that the exclusion of Cuba has just gone on longer than a reasonable length of time.

"It must be recalled that president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said the same thing at the last summit he attended: "This should be the last summit that Cuba does not attend." However, Cuba will not be in Colombia, continues to be excluded from Summits of the Americas and we are not happy about it."

The first summit of the Americas took place in Miami in 1994 with the attendance of the 34 active members from the Organization of American States from which Cuba was suspended in 1962. The suspension was lifted in 2009, but the Cuban government has not initiated the reincorporation process and has said it has no intentions of doing so.

The US government has openly expressed its refusal to accept Cuba at Cartagena de Indias, where the summit is taking place next April, since Havana does not comply with the 2001 democratic principles of the charter approved that year.

Besides the summit and Cuba, Patriota and Timerman also discussed the Malvinas (Falkland)

Islands. Argentina recently accused England of sending nuclear weapons to the islands and using them as a military base to control the South Atlantic.

"We - and the region as a whole - reaffirm our firm and unequivocal support for Argentine sovereignty over the islands," declared Patriota.

The issue will be discussed at the next meeting of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone in Montevideo. At that meeting it is expected that Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay will be joined by African nations in the South Atlantic region. "We are certain that all the countries in the Peace Zone will support Argentina's position," declared Timerman.

The two ministers also discussed a visit by Argentine technicians to the rocket launch base of Alcântara, in the state of Maranhão, this week (on March 15), as part of a bilateral effort to reactivate exchange programs between the two nation-neighbors.

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