

## Brazil Opposition Wants OAS Mission to Check on Venezuela's Political Prisoners

Contributed by Newsroom  
Wednesday, 04 November 2009

Venezuela will have to wait a little longer for Brazilian approval to get inside the Mercosur. Brazil's opposition announced it will attempt to delay as much as possible the Senate vote on the incorporation of Venezuela to Mercosur which is scheduled to take place this Wednesday following the approval by the Foreign Affairs committee last week.

The full house Wednesday agenda includes a vote on Venezuela's full membership of Mercosur which opens the way for the definitive approval of the initiative sponsored by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva with strong support from the Brazilian business community.

Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez formally requested membership in 2006, which had a quick approval from the Argentine and Uruguayan legislatures, but was stalled in the Brazilian Senate, until last week.

Mercosur fourth full member Paraguay has no date for the presentation of the proposal to Congress, following an exchange of strong words and accusations between Paraguayan Senators and President Chavez.

However the Brazilian opposition in the Senate has anticipated it continues to mistrust President Chavez and his "democratic credentials."

"We can't accept certain stances of President Chavez and that is why we are going to make the approval by the full house a difficult issue," promised conservative Senator José Agripino Maia.

He said the blocking initiative has the full support from the Brazilian Social Democracy party, the second strongest force in the Senate.

"Before we decide on Venezuela we must agree on sending a mission from the Organization of American States to investigate reiterated claims of human rights abuses and the existence of political prisoners in that country," said Senator Maia.

Apparently the opposition strategy is to have the Senate president Senator José Sarney, a close ally of President Lula, join the offensive against the incorporation of Venezuela, a position he has sustained since 2006.

Sarney has been one of the strongest voices against having Venezuela join Mercosur alleging President Chavez administration and practices do not comply with the "democratic clause."

However the government and allies have the sufficient votes in the Senate and expect a swift approval of the proposal.

"Sarney is not going to make his personal position a priority," said Senator Renato Casagrande.

Last week's approval by the Senate committee was also a great plus for Lula who on that very day started an official visit to Venezuela.

"President Lula has come like Jesus Christ with the good news. He's only missing the long hair", was President Chavez reaction on receiving the news of the Senate committee vote.

"This is to the benefit of all of us. Creating a big market of South America will turn us into a powerful economic pole," said Lula. Brazilian policy on Venezuela has been divided between those contrary to the Mercosur incorporation because of the absence of democratic guarantees, and those more pragmatic who feel it's better to have President Chavez in the fold than outside in alliance with out of the region partners.

The second position, boosted by prospects of contracts worth billions of US dollars for Brazilian corporations in Venezuela, confirmed during President Lula's visit, finally prevailed.

Mercopress