



AS IT IS

South American Leaders Meet for First Time Since 2015

May 30, 2023

South American leaders gathered in Brazil's capital on Tuesday after an invitation for a meeting from Brazil's president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Eleven presidents and a top government official from Peru met in Brasília to discuss issues including poverty, climate change, high inflation and hunger.

Peru's president, Dina Boularte, is under legal investigation and cannot leave the country.

At a news conference on Monday, Lula and Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro discussed the meeting.

Lula said the goal was to get the leaders together to start the process of working together again.

"We won't decide anything...it is just about discussing possibilities," he said.

The leaders said the goal is not to create a new Union of South American Nations, but to set up a process to make a similar organization.

The Union of South American Nations, known in Spanish as UNASUR, started in 2008 under the guidance of former Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez. It once included 12 South American nations but by 2019, it had fallen apart. Its last meeting came in 2015.

In 2019 another working group called ProSur was set up by the then-leaders of Chile and Colombia to include governments on the political right. However, that group also lost **momentum** after recent elections put governments on the political left in office.

Lula said the main idea of creating a new South American group would be to “work together on economic, investment and environmental issues.”

Maduro said he hopes the group can make a statement asking the United States to lift economic restrictions, or sanctions, on Venezuela. He and Lula both criticized the sanctions on Monday.

It is the first visit by Maduro to Brazil in about eight years. Former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro barred Maduro from the country during his term.

Gisele Padovan is with Brazil’s Foreign Ministry. She said Brazil and Venezuela have some different ideas, but Lula wants to “reactivate regional **dialogue**” based on what the two countries have in common.

She said, “The aim of this **initiative** is to unite all the countries of the region once again.”

I’m Dan Friedell.

Dan Friedell adapted this story for Learning English based on a report by Reuters.

Words in This Story

momentum *-n.* the force that permits something to continue moving although force is no longer acting upon it

dialogue *-n. (formal)* a discussion or a series of talks aimed at reducing disagreement

initiative *-n* a plan or program to solve a problem

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