

Rio Group accepts Cuba; Group demands role in global economic order

Argentina, Brazil & Mexico to go to Washington for World Economic Summit

By [Raul Cortes](#)

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MEXICO CITY — The Rio Group club of Latin American and Caribbean nations agreed to join forces in order to deal with the current economic crisis and to defend their rights in a possible new world financial order, on the same day it approved the inclusion of Cuba as the organization's 23rd member.

These decisions were taken Thursday during a meeting of Rio Group foreign ministers in the Mexican city of Zacatecas.

At a press conference after the meeting, Mexican Foreign Secretary Patricia Espinosa stressed the participants' interest in creating a common front to meet the difficult international economic situation.

Those present also argued in favor of "more and better supervision" of the financial system and that "in the process of definition there be active participation and the inclusion of all views," especially of Latin America and the Caribbean, she said.

"Within the Rio Group there are very different realities," but there is "an acknowledgment that this is a crisis that is going to affect us all and that, therefore, we ought to promote unified action," she said.

Espinosa also said that Rio Group countries going this weekend to the G-20 meeting in Washington - Argentina, Brazil and Mexico - should express the concerns of the region there.

At the same press conference, Chile's deputy foreign minister, Alberto van Klaveren, said that "there is a pretty obvious lack of international regulation, of which the main victims are precisely the countries that are most vulnerable."

"Latin America had no part in creating this international crisis; on the contrary, it has been seen by even the most critical to be a fairly stable area" and its "economic behavior has been very prudent," he said.

With regard to the incorporation of communist-ruled Cuba, Espinosa said that the measure "makes the Rio Group more representative, stronger, more inclusive, more plural."

The decision, she said, "is a reflection of the reality of our region."

Aides to Espinosa told Efe that Cuba's deputy foreign minister, Abelardo Moreno, attended the meeting in Zacatecas as a guest.

The inclusion of Cuba into the group had been analyzed for years, but some countries always rejected it, notably Central American countries closely aligned with Washington.

The current Rio Group was born of the Contadora Group created by Mexico, Colombia, Panama and Venezuela in 1983 to mediate Central American conflicts.

Until Friday it comprised Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela. EFE

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