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FERNANDEZ CONTRADICTED MUJICA ON THE HAGUE'S TRIAL OUTCOME

Daniel Isgleas

Gonzalo Fernandez assured that Uruguay will receive a “conclusive” and favourable ruling in the controversy maintained with Argentina before the International Court of Justice of The Hague on the construction of Botnia’s cellulose plant.

The hitherto Foreign Affairs Minister and appointed Minister of Defence was consulted after the meeting of the Council of Ministers – the last in which he attended as head of Foreign Affairs – on a comment by presidential candidate from the Frente Amplio [coalition of political parties] José Mujica made on Sunday 30th at Maldonado, in the sense that the ruling by The Hague’s Court will not mean “a conclusive step in favour of Uruguay nor of Argentina” and that “it will try to contemplate both positions”.

Fernandez contradicted Mujica by answering that he didn’t know what does the candidate “understand” by “conclusive ruling”, after which he explained in more detail about the Argentine claim before the International Court of Justice of The Hague and which is the outcome the government expects.

“The Court received a demand from Argentina that started being a preliminary procedure of precautionary measures, whose aim was that the cellulose plant were not constructed or that it did not start up operations” he said. “We, in respect of that demand, of that procedural claim – as its technical name refers to – believe that it will be conclusively set aside. That is to say, we estimate and are going with a very good frame of mind and thinking that the demand will be rejected”, he added.

He also said that “the government believes that, insofar as the demand in itself, that is to say with respect to the procedural claim of impeding first the construction and erection and now the operation of the cellulose pulp processing plant, the verdict will be a conclusive one”.

In any case, Fernandez said that he believes Uruguay will receive a “spank” on “formal” issues.

LIME AND SAND. Hernandez marked a dissent with Mujica who, on Sunday 30th in Maldonado, had said that the ruling from The Hague will agree with both sides in conflict and that for that reason the need to discuss with Argentina will arise so as to repair the relationship.

The presidential candidate augured at this instance that the Court of The Hague will issue “a Solomonic ruling” as a result of its pronouncement on the Argentine claim

insofar as whether Uruguay breached the Treaty of the River Uruguay or not by authorising Botnia's installation.

The candidate for the Frente Amplio coalition maintained in this occasion that he has "information from law experts" who assured him that "the resolution of The Hague will represent one shovelful of lime and one shovelful of sand for our country".

Nevertheless, Fernandez maintained yesterday after the meeting of the Council of Ministers that the government is convinced that, through formal channels, The Hague's Court will turn down the demand introduced by Argentina against the operation of Botnia's plant.

He estimated that in the pronouncement, "the neighbouring country will have some sort of backing in its legal actions". Fernandez said that this is due to the Court being a body of political and not technical nature. But he nevertheless was of the opinion that Uruguay will come out favoured by the pronouncement of the Court.

CONTINUITY. In the meantime, the government finished yesterday with the last package of cabinet changes that were announced at the beginning of August for the electoral campaign. The administration will continue along the same path, something that was confirmed by both the outgoing Ministers and their replacements.

When talking to journalists, Fernandez informed that he will be replaced by the current undersecretary, Ambassador Pedro Vaz. The position of Vaz will be occupied by Nelson Fernandez, until now Director General of the Secretariat.

Minister of Foreign Affairs: At most there will be some sort of "a spanking" for Uruguay in the Court of The Hague's ruling.

Due to this partial renovation, Fernandez also confirmed that he will be substituting José Bayardi at the head of the Defence Ministry, who will go back to his seat at the Parliament. Until last night, at the Defence Ministry they were not clear on when the formal swearing in of Fernandez will take place.

Hector Lascano, Minister of Tourism and Sports, introduced his new undersecretary Antonio Carámbula that replaces Lilián Kechichian.

Daniel Martinez left the office of Industry, Energy and Mining, to fully dedicate himself to the campaign, because he will be heading a list of candidates to the Senate for the Socialist Party. He was replaced by Raul Sendic whom in turn left the presidency of Ancap, where he was substituted by the hitherto Vice-president of the company, Germán Riet.

On the other hand, Enrique Rubio left the Office of Planning and Budget (OPP) in order to dedicate himself to the campaign, and was substituted by Martín Dibarboure, ex head of the Development Corporation.

