

# Secretary-General Luis Almagro

## Of the Organization of the American States



**Luis Almagro** (Spanish pronunciation: born June 1, 1963) is the 10th Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS).

A Uruguayan lawyer and diplomat and politician representing the Uruguayan Broad Front party (Frente Amplio), Almagro served as Minister of Foreign Affairs between 2010 and 2015, during the Presidency of Jose “Pepe” Mujica.

Almagro was elected to the OAS on a campaign of More Rights for More People, viewing his tenure as an opportunity to reduce inequality throughout the Western Hemisphere. “As OAS Secretary General, I am both government and opposition. I must be the voice of those without a voice; the more discriminated against. I must be the voice of those who suffer inequality; who suffer from the lack of protection of their rights; and I must be the staunchest defender of those rights.”

Luis Almagro was born June 1, 1963 in Cerro Chato/Paysandu, Uruguay. Almagro studied at the University of the Republic in Montevideo, where he earned his law degree. During his 20 year career with the Uruguayan foreign ministry, Almagro represented Uruguay in the Islamic Republic of Iran (1991 – 1996), at UNESCO (1998), I

n Germany (1998-2003), as well as serving as Ambassador to China (2007-2010). He is fluent in Spanish, English, and French.

In October, 2014, Almagro was elected to the Senate during the national elections of Uruguay. He resigned in order to take the position of Secretary General. Almagro is married and has seven children.

During Almagro’s time as Foreign Minister (2010-2015), Uruguay drew global recognition for a small South American country as they became the largest per capita contributor to UN peacekeeping forces as well as secured Uruguay’s successful election seat to the UN Security Council. Almagro also supported efforts on the restoration of relations between Cuba and the US.

Almagro’s commitment to human rights extended to domestic affairs as demonstrated by the active role in the repeal of the 1986 Expiry Law, which granted amnesty for crimes and human rights abuses committed during the civic-military dictatorship between 1973 and 1985, and actively supported prosecutions for these crimes.

A lawyer, Almagro was a member of the Executive Committee that drafted the groundbreaking legislation regulating the possession, growth, and distribution of marijuana in Uruguay in 2013. Uruguay is the first country in the world to introduce legislation of its kind. He also represented Uruguay at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) in the Philip Morris case against Uruguay for over its anti-tobacco policies. After 6 years, ICSID ruled in favor of Uruguay forcing Philip Morris to pay for the costs of the defendants and the court.

Almagro was elected Secretary General of the Organization of American States on March 18, 2015, earning the support of 33 of the 34 Members States, including one abstention. He officially took office on May 26, 2015.

Taking over the Organization at a time when questions about the OAS’ relevance were augmented by a financial crisis and polarization in the hemisphere, Almagro’s first year in office was marked by his outspoken stance on democracy and human rights. His leadership has widely been seen as reinvigorating an Organization.