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## **Argentina Official Sees Little Chance Of FTAA By 2005**

BUENOS AIRES (AP)--An Argentine official told local reporters Tuesday that moves to create a Free Trade Area of the Americas, as promised by 2005, remain a long shot - lacking political momentum.

Eduardo Sigal, an undersecretary for economic integration in Argentina's Foreign Ministry, was quoted as saying the FTAA is "in a crisis" and even "in the freezer."

Speaking with local reporters, Sigal said he didn't see the necessary political momentum needed to achieve an FTAA that successive U.S. administrations have sought to put in place by 2005.

"The Bush administration has elections coming up in November and doesn't want to risk anything," Sigal added.

But he said, meanwhile, that moves continue apace toward greater integration of economies in the region.

Sigal's comments come as Argentine officials join their colleagues from the South American trade group Mercosur for a meeting in Brussels, where they are trying to conclude a trade deal with the European Union.

Mercosur comprises Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. Chile, Bolivia and Peru hold associate member status, while Mexico and Venezuela are set to receive the same status at a later date.

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