

Peru Negotiator Calls US Inflexible In Free-Trade Talks

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LIMA -- Peru's chief free-trade negotiator said late Wednesday that the U.S. lacked flexibility in talks aimed at reaching a free-trade deal between some of the Andean nations and the U.S.

"I think that there is evidence of a certain inflexibility in the management of issues that are fundamental for us. I can refer, above all, to the issue of intellectual property," Pedro de la Flor said on television station Canal N.

He pointed to "extensive" unresolved disagreements on the issue of protecting genetic materials, and added that Peru wants to protect access to public health, saying this was "nonnegotiable."

A third round of talks aimed at reaching a free-trade deal between the U.S. and Peru, Colombia and Ecuador took place in Lima in July.

The Andean nations and the U.S. exchanged text proposals on most of the chapters in the proposed agreement, officials said.

The U.S.-Andean Free Trade Agreement negotiations were launched in May in Colombia, while a second round took place in Atlanta. A fourth round is set to take place in Puerto Rico in September.

The U.S. government has said that as a destination for U.S. exports, "the Andeans collectively represented a market of \$7 billion in 2002, while the U.S. imported \$9.8 billion from the region."

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