

## STATEMENT FROM BRAZIL'S FORMER MINISTERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

São Paulo, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Last October, we, the former Brazilian ministers of the environment, warned how important it was for the elected government not to extinguish the Ministry of the Environment and to keep Brazil in the Paris Agreement. We believe the consolidation and strengthening of environmental and climate governance is an essential condition for Brazil's international positioning and to boost the country's development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

More than 100 days into the new government, the initiatives underway go in the opposite direction of our warning, compromising the country's image and its international credibility.

To this, we cannot remain silent — much to the contrary. We insist on the need for a permanent and constructive dialogue.

Socio-environmental governance in Brazil is being dismantled, in defiance of our Constitution.

We are witnessing a series of unprecedented actions that deplete the Ministry of the Environment's capacity to formulate and implement public policies - among them, the elimination of the National Water Agency, the transfer of the Brazilian Forest Service to the Department of Agriculture, the extinction of the Department of Climate Change and the threat of dismantling protected areas, the disempowerment of the National Environmental Council, and the extinction of the Chico Mendes Institute (ICMbio). Over the last three decades, Brazilian society has been able, through successive governments, to create a set of laws and institutions capable of facing the challenges of the country's environmental agenda at various levels.

The decision to keep Brazil in the Paris Agreement has its credibility questioned nationally and internationally by the political, institutional, and legal manifestations adopted or supported by the government that reinforce climate change denial shared by key figures of the current administration.

The absence of objective guidelines on the subject not only hampers the fulfillment of the commitments assumed by Brazil, jeopardizing its leading global role, but also signals setbacks in the efforts to reduce GHG's, in the necessary adaptation actions and in the compliance with the National Climate Change Policy.

We are facing a real risk of uncontrolled deforestation in the Amazon. The frequent contradictory signs in the fight against environmental crime can convey the idea that deforestation is essential for the success of Brazilian agriculture. Science and the country's own recent political history fully demonstrate that this is a fallacy and a mistake that will cost us all, dearly.

There is an urgent need to continue the fight against organized crime and corruption in illegal deforestation and the occupation of protected areas and water sources, especially in large urban centers.

The discourse against the governing bodies responsible for environmental control, especially Ibama [1] and ICMBio, and the questioning of INPE's [2] monitoring data, whose success is self-evident, adds to a critical budgetary and personnel situation for them. In the end, all of this reinforces a sense of impunity, which is a sure sign for more deforestation and increasing violence.

Also, it is necessary to strengthen the rules that make up the Brazilian legal system, structured from a systemic perspective, based on the National Environmental Policy Act of 1981. The National Environmental System needs to be strengthened especially by funding the bodies that integrate it.

The prospect of loosening environmental licensing, disguised as "management efficiency," is dangerous in a country that has just gone through the trauma of the Brumadinho dam collapse. The business and financial sectors require clear rules, which provide a safety net to their activities.

It is not possible, almost seven years after the change of the Forest Code that its provisions agreed to by Congress and reinforced by the Federal Supreme Court is under attack when they should be simply implemented. Under the claim of "legal certainty" only to one side, that of economic power, an entire country is put under risk of judicialization.

Nor can we fail to point out our concern about policies regarding indigenous populations, *quilombolas* [3], and other traditional peoples, which began with the withdrawal of FUNAI's [4] power to demarcate indigenous lands. The precepts established in the Federal Constitution of 1988 must be fulfilled, reinforced by Brazil's commitments, made internationally many decades ago.

Brazil has come a long way in consolidating its environmental governance. We have become a global leader in fighting climate change, humanity's greatest challenge in this century. We are also one of the most biodiverse countries on the planet, which gives us enormous responsibility for the conservation of all of our biomes. This week, the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), considered as the "IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) of biodiversity", released its first summary to decision makers, alerting them to the severe threats to biodiversity: one million species of animals and plants in the world are threatened with extinction.

It is imperative that Brazil reaffirms its responsibility of protecting the environment and defines clear directions that lead to the promotion of sustainable development and the advancement of the socio-environmental agenda, based on the firm and committed action of its rulers.

There is no development without the protection of the environment. Moreover, this is done with robust and efficient regulatory frameworks, excellent public management, the participation of society, and international positioning.

We reaffirm that Brazil cannot turn its back on the world in the twenty-first century. More than ever, it is necessary to prevent the country from turning its back on itself.

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[1] Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources.

[2] National Institute for Space Research.

[3] Descendants of slaves who fled Brazil's cotton plantations in the 19th century.

[4] Brazil's National Indigenous Foundation.