The rule of law is essential to a successful democracy. Democracies perform best when all citizens, even the most powerful, are subject to the same rules; when norms and rules are widely embraced and complied with; when deviation from the established rules is effectively curtailed; and when disputes can be effectively settled in a timely manner.

Three decades of democratic rule in Brazil have produced meaningful progress towards establishing a universal and effective rule of law in South America’s largest nation. The formal institutions of the judicial system have been improved in significant ways through a series of reforms to the legal structure, changes in procedural rules, and improvements in staffing and administration. The courts have addressed rising citizen demands by improving their efficiency, even as they simultaneously expanded access. The judicial system has narrowed the gap between demands for justice and the provision of rights, expanding the effective civil, political, and social rights available to citizens. Courts have reformed their internal governance, in ways that increasingly curtail inefficient practices and constrain unscrupulous actors. As a consequence, the courts have become central players at the heart of Brazilian democracy, contributing to improved social justice, enhanced development outcomes, and the deepening of democracy.
This has occurred in part because of an ongoing process of institutional improvement. Over the past thirty years of democracy, the country has seen moments of institutional innovation in the provision of legal services, such as the granting of almost complete autonomy to a powerful federal prosecutor’s office, the *Ministério Público*, the creation of oversight bodies such as the *Controladoria Geral da União* (CGU), and a major judicial reform in 2004, which created an external oversight body, the National Judiciary Council (CNJ), to improve court performance. Increased funding to bureaucracies such as the Federal Police and the Accounting Tribunals, together with increased transparency, have boosted the monitoring of public works and government service provision.

On May 22, the Brazil Institute of the Wilson Center will host an all-day conference of experts to review progress and challenges in the building of the rule of law in Latin America’s largest democracy. This will be the first of a series of four conferences planned for 2015 and 2016, and part of a broader Wilson Center initiative to examine the rule of law on a global scale. The conference is co-sponsored by Fundação Getulio Vargas law schools in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and American University’s Washington College of Law and School of International Service in Washington, D.C. It was made possible by a generous support of Mattos Filho Advogados and Arnold & Porter LLP.
PROGRAM

8:30 – 9:00 AM
Light Continental Breakfast
6th Floor Gildenhorn Room

9:00 – 9:30 AM
Welcome:
Paulo Sotero, Director of the Brazil Institute

Opening Remarks:
Ambassador Luiz Alberto Figueiredo, Brazilian Ambassador to the United States

9:30 – 11:00 AM
First session: The Courts and the Rule of Law in Democratic Brazil
Minister Luis Inácio Adams, Office of the Union’s Solicitor General
Dean Oscar Vilhena Vieira, FGV Law School - São Paulo
Judge Peter Messitte, US District Court, District of Maryland, and Washington College of Law
Dr. Glaucia Maria Lauletta Frascino, Partner, Mattos Filho Advogados

BREAK

11:15 – 12:45 PM
Second session: Reforming Institutions and Changing Ideas in the Brazilian Judiciary
Minister Nelson Jobim, former congressman, Minister of Justice, Minister of Defense, and former Chief Justice of the Brazilian Supreme Federal Tribunal
Dean Joaquim Falcão, FGV Law School - Rio de Janeiro
Dr. Linn Hammergren, Independent Consultant on Justice Reform

1:00 – 2:15PM
Lunch:
The legal business environment and corporate governance
Eli Whitney Debevoise II, Senior Partner, Arnold & Porter LLP
Amadeu Ribeiro, Managing Partner New York Office, Mattos Filho Advogados

2:30 -4:00 PM
Third session: Democratizing Access and Oversight in Brazilian Law
Professor Maria Tereza Sadek, University of São Paulo
Professor Luciana Gross Cunha, FGV Law School - São Paulo
Professor Matthew M. Taylor, School of International Service, American University

BREAK
4:15 – 5:15 PM
Concluding session: Brazil and the International Legal Order
Dean Jim Goldgeier, School of International Service, American University
Dean Joaquim Falcão, FGV Law School, Rio de Janeiro
Dean Oscar Vilhena, FGV Law School São Paulo
Judge Peter Messitte, US District Court, District of Maryland, and Washington College of Law

ADJOURN