

Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota

Speech Transcript

May 31, 2011

Thank you very much for your very comprehensive introduction, and let me start by saying that I am very pleased to be back in Washington and to see so many familiar faces, starting with Tony Harrington, former ambassador to Brazil and Paulo Sotero from the Brazil Institute. I congratulate you Mrs. Harman on your assumption of the Woodrow Wilson Institute. It is a great institution. I was here many times as ambassador, and I met many very distinguished thinkers and political scientists who subsequently became my friends. I thank Ambassador Mauro Viera for his presence, and I see many colleagues from the Brazilian diplomatic community here and from Washington as well.

I see this as an opportunity to have a conversation among friends – even though the press is here, so we have to be a little vigilant [laughs] – on these first few months of a new administration under President Dilma Rousseff, our first female president. It is quite an extraordinary accomplishment in many ways for Brazil, and for the region, but maybe the first thought I would share with you is that a country will obviously have much more capital to invest in foreign policy if it is managing its domestic agenda in ways that will produce results, and I think that this is one of the fundamental ideas to bear in mind when one looks at Brazil's foreign policy and Brazil's articulation of its relationships around the world in the past several years, in the past decade, and continuing into this administration.

Brazil grew at high rates over the past decade, last year 7.5%. That is quantitative, of course, and the statistics are very impressive, the reserves that have reached 300 billion dollars, the increase in per capita income, etc., but I think there is also a qualitative improvement. First of all the reduction in poverty, millions of Brazilians that were brought into the middle class, the millions of Brazilians that escaped extreme poverty, not to minimize the fact that there are still millions of Brazilians living in poverty, but a number that is manageable and has become manageable, so that even in this administration's period in office, or perhaps a little more, we will have

eliminated, or come very close eliminating extreme poverty in Brazil, which is something that would have seemed unimaginable even ten years ago or fifteen years ago.

So, there is much to say about the economy, economic growth with social progress with reduction of poverty with increased opportunity. The figures on employment I think are very eloquent also, when one looks at the very challenging situations that this country and European economies are undergoing at present and one looks at the situation in Brazil, where unemployment fell to 6.4% last April, so much below the world average of unemployment, which is also quite unprecedented for Brazil; when one looks at these figures and one also takes into account the awareness regarding , for example, the environmental dimension of things, reduction of deforestation, the very ambitious targets that have been adopted to reduce CO2 emissions; when one looks at the very strong democratic roots that Brazil has demonstrated in the past decades, I would say, alternating between political parties, different emphasis in public policy, but nevertheless through a very, I think, comparatively harmonious process. In fact it is curious, but on many policy issues you have something close to a national consensus in Brazil. You can even describe Brazil as a less polarized society then the United States in some respects, certainly when it comes to environmental issues.

When we took to Copenhagen, unilaterally determined targets of reducing CO2 emissions between 36 and 39%, based on businesses-as-usual growth up to 2020, these targets in a few months became enshrined into national legislation with a comparatively quick domestic debate. That would be very hard to imagine in other countries and certainly in this country from where I am speaking right now.

So, democratic governance convergence between the extremes of the political spectrum, human rights also, I think human rights is becoming increasingly important, sometimes the press or observers like to point out President Dilma Rousseff is particularly keen in upholding human rights. But I think it is important to bear in mind a significant and longer-term perspective. First of all when you reduce poverty, when you reduce extreme poverty, and you bring people into the middle class, you are promoting human rights, you are contributing to human dignity and you are empowering people for them to exercise their political civilian rights and other rights. When you take up an agenda which is fundamental in Brazil, such as the racial equality agenda, and this was done in a more straightforward manner in the past years than ever before in our history by

the creation of a ministerial position that deals with the promotion of racial equality, I think we are also signaling very strong emphasis in human rights. Similarly, other agencies were created to promote gender equality and actually one could argue that this has worked so well that we actually have a female president.

But nevertheless, I think President Dilma Rousseff brings to office a personal history that speaks for itself, someone who was in prison for her beliefs; belief in pluralism, belief in upholding a certain view of economic and social progress which at the time was considered a threat to stability, and for this she was put into prison and tortured – this was not something that one forgets easily, and she does bring into office a strong desire to build upon the many important steps that have been taken in the progress in the past few years, and take Brazil into a new chapter of society that can be largely described as a predominantly middle class society, which we already are, one where citizens can fully exercise their rights, including their political rights and other rights and where justice works for all. In short a more egalitarian society in a country in a part of the world which has for a long time been known and characterized and recognized as being the most unequal in the world. So we are bridging that gap very quickly, and coming back to my initial point, I think this opens up an entire new perspective for engaging the rest of the world.

When one looks at the rest of the world, it is a world that is in very quick transformation. Of course the upheaval in the Arab world this year is maybe one of the most eloquent examples of that, but even beyond looking at the Arab world, what we examine as a more multipolar international configuration. Recently, President Obama made a speech in London where he was talking about US and European leadership and he felt the need to remind the international community as it had forgotten that other actors are also important including Brazil, India, China, and there are of course more, but not an unlimited number that have the kind of capacity to influence decisions and to reach out at a global level. It's a world of opportunity and a world also where Brazil, I think, maybe with India, we share this common trait among the emerging powers, it's the first time in our history really that we can say that we have full global outreach. Just some quantitative facts; for the first time we have diplomatic relations with every single country in the world, and this is only since 2010. We are among the countries in the world with the largest number of embassies anywhere. In Africa, we are number seven for example in number of

embassies. Brasilia has become quite a different capital than it was when I moved there as a young diplomat in the early 1980s, when you had a handful of embassies. Today there are more than 130, there is even an embassy from Fiji, from the Fiji islands, in Brazil, which demonstrates that even in the Pacific islands there are bilateral issues that we deal with and as well as many others, as environmental ones for example.

Now I think if one looks at the new multipolar configuration there are certain things one can say about it besides the fact that Brazil and India are relatively newcomers to this true global outreach arena. First of all the United States remains unquestionably the number one military economic power, very strong, with a GDP several items bigger than the number two, and certainly even as Brazil goes up, the scale in terms of GDP weight as the seventh economy in the world today, perhaps fifth in ten years some say before some say a little bit after, the distance is still great between the kind of wealth that one can contemplate in a country as the United States, or a developed European country, and in some of the emerging countries. Besides this stronger presence of one of the poles, you can argue also that China is quickly becoming a number two that is fast ahead of most of the others in terms of economic, demographic, military presence. Of course China and Russia having already been world powers before, they bring a different mnemonic content into their present international situation. But there are certain traits that I think distinguish Brazil from any of these poles. One of them is the fact that we are de-nuclearized. Not only because of our firm belief in diplomacy, our difficulty with military solutions to international peace and security issues, and a sense that we would like to preserve our part of the world, free from weapons of mass destruction, and we have acted upon this. We have acted upon this by enshrining in our constitution a ban on the development of nuclear power for other than peaceful purposes. We have joined treaties, regionally the Treaty of Tlatelolco of course, for most, but also through Mercosur, through UNASUR, and in ensuring that our part of the world remains free from those weapons. Not only this is a singular trait, perhaps it sets us aside from the other poles that are emerging, or that have already emerged, including Europe. One tends to overlook Europe, but Europe as the European Union certainly is a very strong economic power, and many of its individual members still among some the strongest economic and military powers in the world, certainly Britain and France, Germany, to name but three.

The fact that we have essentially cooperative and peaceful relations with all of our neighbors; it may seem obvious to be people who deal mostly with Latin America if you place us in a world global context. It's quite unusual because all the other powers have stressful relations, difficulties, tensions, either inside their own territory due to ethnic differences and religious minorities, and so on, or because of other geopolitical and historic situations. Well, this is not the case in South America for sure. South America can be described today as the second fastest growing region in the world, if you look at the average growth rates. And it has another important characteristic in that it's a democratic region, all governments are democratically elected, all governments are demonstrating, with varying degrees, a capacity to confront the challenge of inequality and trying to find through autonomous experimentation, the road to sustainable development, with high levels of growth with social inclusion, and increasing also environmental awareness.

If you put all of this together, I believe Brazil is quite uniquely placed today to participate actively in the shaping of a new world order, more multipolar, more democratic, more in tune with today's challenges, and any of the key sectors that we need to coordinate internationally: whether it is economy and finance (and we can do this through the G20 and other mechanisms); whether it is trade (with our active participation through the WTO-G20 we have also contributed to modernize and in many ways, even revolutionize the working methods of the old GATT and today's WTO); whether it is the environmental agenda (and certainly when one looks at Copenhagen and Cancun, it is very clear; we have here with us the environmental negotiator, Ambassador Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado, who was at both conferences, and I think, if one asks any of the participants in any of those two conferences, they would signal that Brazil is certainly an important, or even a key actor in those discussions).

And I believe also, more and more, although this is a field where global governance has yet to experience the kind of adjournment or modernization that one has found in other areas, in the peace and security agenda. Along with Japan as you know, Brazil is a country with the longest serving time at the Security Council as a non-permanent member. Eleven stints, eleven two-year stints, so you know, if one thinks of a sixty year period, that is almost one third of the Security Council's existence, and certainly in the post-Cold War period, very frequent and very active, and often very creative participation in the Security Council. With, I think, a very strong voice

for diplomacy for peaceful solution to challenges in this area, and also a very independent view of where the solutions may lie, a very independent view that comes from a capacity that I think we have developed. Maybe it is something that is deeply engrained in our own DNA, a capacity to keep a dialogue with countries of very different cultural background, religious, ethnic, level of development, etcetera.

Well, essentially what I have done up to now is a little bit of a commercial about Brazil and I think many of you that follow Brazil closely are aware of these strengths. But I don't want to minimize the challenges either. And I see today almost a national consensus emerging in where some of these challenges are. We are very proud of the fact that we are an economy with a very clean energy matrix, the biofuels agenda, the new oil finds, make us energy self-sufficient, more than 45% of our energy is from renewable sources. We are also very proud of the advances in agriculture. We have what is arguably the most advanced agricultural research institute for tropical agriculture in EMBRAPA, and this has presented a tremendous gain in productivity, and in a capacity also to farm in areas of the country that were previously considered unfit for agriculture. But when we look at our industrial capacity I think there's a growing awareness that we need to take strong measures to enhance our competitiveness. There is unease over the large number of Asian imports and consumer goods. Many of the low budget electronic products that come from Asia seem to be disrupting, or at least creating a sense of insecurity in parts of the private sector. There is also a sense, for example, that our trade relationship with the United States, where Brazil has a growing trade deficit, represents a certain threat also to a sustainable trading pattern, and this also has to do with industrial competitiveness.

There is a sense that infrastructure is a challenge in Brazil. We are preparing for the soccer World Cup of 2014, Olympic Games of 2016, the Rio + 20, which will be a very important conference next year, twenty years after the Rio conference on the environment and development. And we are of course (I think I will come back to this, because this is going to be a very significant venue for us to promote a debate on new paradigms of development) speaking about green economy, reduction of poverty, fully incorporating the environmental side of things into our new thinking on development. But there is a sense that our airports, our roads, our ports, need to be modernized at a very accelerated pace. And while I believe the government of Dilma

Rousseff is working very actively to overcome these challenges, this is a point that can represent to some degree, and is already representing a bottleneck in our development.

Education would be on anyone's agenda when one speaks of challenges. Basic primary education, university education, there's a shortage of man power in some of the more advanced engineering and scientific areas which explains why so much emphasis is being put in our discussions especially with more developed partners like the United States, some European countries, but also China, and countries in the region, on developing educational programs. We would like to open at least 75,000 grants for students at the graduate, post-graduate level, to study abroad in fields of science, engineering, mathematics especially, between now and 2014. So of course progress in competitiveness, scientific progress, innovation, are all linked to the level of education and we are keenly aware more has to be done, if we are to remain competitive. Actually its quite interesting, because when President Obama, I just say this as an aside, met with President Dilma Rousseff in March, one of her first remarks was to say "I read your State of Union address and many of the concerns we have in Brazil, seem to be also present in your own concerns", I think the word innovation was used, I don't know, fifteen times in that speech [on the State of the Union], as one of the keys to the future and the industrial progress here in the United States as well.

There are other issues that I can include in the column of the challenges: urban violence, which has been reducing, but is still a concern in the largest cities in Brazil, In fact, the richest cities in Brazil are often the prey to the highest levels of crime, which speaks again of the inequality issue; extreme wealth living side by side with extreme poverty, and creating this social tension. On drug trafficking in Latin America, we are comparatively, let's say, protected from some of the more violent patterns that one observes south of the border of the United States, up to Central America. But, we need to be very vigilant if we want to protect and to preserve South America as we would like to do as a continent for democracy, economic growth, social progress, and essentially peace. I think it has the full potential to be an example for peace and however you define it, peace must include development, must include, today also increasingly, respect for human rights, respect for the environment.

So, these are the important challenges we face. And while we look at our strengths and our weakness and engaging with the outside world, what I think President Dilma Rousseff brings to

the office is a blend of extreme pragmatism and realism, and this can be seen in the emphasis she's been placing on very concrete results in all of her bilateral meetings. There have been quite a few. There was President Obama's visit in March. There was President Dilma's visit to Beijing in April, and subsequently she attended a BRICS summit in the island of Hainan in the south of China. There have been many visitors to Brazil, from countries as diverse as East Timor and Germany, or Sweden, but a common denominator in most of the discussions has been looking at trade figures, looking at ways to enhance trade, and investment, to increase opportunity for scientific/technological exchange, look at the innovation agenda, look at the education agenda. In addition to this pragmatic or realistic or result oriented streak that is one of her defining traits, she also brings a strong sense of idealism into this position. And this idealism, I think, is translated into the value placed on democratic governance. The value placed on development with social justice, the value placed on human rights, and also on sustainable development, on respect for the environment. This is the blend that has been shaping many of the bilateral discussions, but I think a presentation of what we are trying to accomplish would be incomplete without a reference to the multilateral sphere and to the way we would like to engage internationally in this more multipolar world that I tried to summarize before.

Of course, we are trying to create a capacity for strong partnerships with all the poles. There is a very, well, a traditionally very developed agenda with the United States that we are trying to reconfigure, to reshape, and to bring to a new level. Not only on trust and political dialogue but also on cooperation, and there have been important agreements signed recently, including in the defense area. There have been new fields that we have opened, for example in the exchange of information and experience and in coordination on the promotion of racial equality, to mention another issue. Promotion of gender equality also. Under the leadership of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, an agreement was reached last year for an agenda on this front. And, actually very interestingly we are trying to combine science and gender equality, by promoting a program of exchange between women scientists in the two countries.

But, we would not like to partake or to participate in a world that is more multipolar by bringing to the restricted groups that we may participate in, whether it's the G-20, whether it's a reformed Security Council, whether these are the restricted groups that deal with the environment or with trade, bringing a sense that ok now that we can be part of the elite group, this is an accomplished

objective and we can look at how to shape the future of the world from this perspective. I think this would be a serious mistake, because we have been outside looking in for most of history, and we know how it feels to be outside looking in. And this is what I think creates a special sensitivity to keep in touch with what some people call the G-172, all the UN members who are not members of G-20, and unless we do this I think we run the risk of isolating ourselves from very valid aspirations that cannot be adequately translated or articulated by any small group. And in fact I don't think any country, small as it may be, would be ready to completely outsource their agenda to any representative, whatever the topic may be.

So you will see Brazil also working very hard to enhance its outreach with smaller countries or with less developed countries wherever they may be. You will see us building upon what was a very significant outreach movement during the Lula government, in particular to Africa, the Middle East, towards countries in Asia, towards the new members of the international community in the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, and developing individual specific agendas with all these partners, as well as trying to create new coalitions, some of them I am very engaged in trying to keep alive, and in fact they are very solid and they have kind of generated their own dynamics, like IBSA, the trilateral group that brings together India, Brazil and South Africa, three large multi-ethnic democracies from the developing world. There is also a South America-Arab World Summit. I was recently in Cairo speaking to the Arab League Secretary General (I think he is actually leaving his job tomorrow), Amr Moussa, known to many of you, and the current foreign minister who will become the Arab League Secretary General Nabil el-Araby, and they were saying how they had felt over the past years that Brazil extended its hand to the Arab world. Not necessary to do this under the pressure of the current changes taking place in that part of the world, because this South America-Arab World Summit began in 2005, with its first edition in Brasilia, and created a framework for cooperation on economic and trade matters, on culture, in fact even discovering there was a much deeper cultural link between the two worlds than was previously imagined. In every country in South America you will find a sizable Lebanese, Syrian community, as well as Jewish and many other minorities. But there have never been an organized dialogue between these communities. This is something that is taking place under the sign of very important developments in the Arab world; that I think will signal more democracy, more social justice, more opportunity for the young population in those countries.

There has also been a South America-Africa mechanism. There have been the BRICS summits themselves, which have been very interesting, and you mentioned those in your introduction. So in summary, a very actively engaged foreign policy that will look at the strongest poles in the system that will try to create an environment of cooperative multipolarity. Sometimes I speak of benign multipolarity, there can be many more other scenarios, there could be a competitive one or a multipolarity where communication breaks down, but this is not what we are about. We want to ensure that the coming decades are ones where we can concentrate on creating more dignified, more prosperous societies, more dignity for the individual, and certainly better opportunity for those in the less developed parts of the world. And the global outreach that I mentioned across regions as well, as a very, very strong commitment to multilateralism. And I will end by saying that we are very transformational when it comes to multilateralism, as compared to some other members of the multipolar environment that we live in, and we would like to see more representative mechanisms not only for finance and economic and financial cooperation, for trade, but also for peace and security, for the environment and for all the other global issues where I think the entire international community has a stake in, and certainly you will not see Brazil shying away from these responsibilities.

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