

Taking Action for the World's Poor and Hungry People

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SPEAKER SUMMARY NOTE

Session: Experiences That Have Resulted in Progress in Reducing Poverty and Hunger

Keynote Speaker: *Patrus Ananias de Souza*, Minister of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger, Brazil

Title: The Fight Against Poverty and Hunger—A Priority

I would like to welcome all the authorities who are here right now and to congratulate the initiative of the conference organized by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and by the Chinese State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development (LGOPAD). I also would like to welcome all the participants in this event.

I feel honored to have the opportunity to share experiences with my colleagues from different parts of the world and with high-level experts, such as those who are gathered here right in this event.

By means of focusing on ways to improve the well-being of the world's most poor and hungry people, this Conference promotes a positive synergy among experiences, good results and challenges, and contributes to what we may call "inclusive and fair civilizing process". A true human globalization. There will be neither peace nor justice in the world while around 800 million people are still living in misery and hunger.

Brazil has 189 million inhabitants in a territory of 8.5 million km².

Brazil's federative organization is based on 3 autonomous levels of government: the Union; 26 states and the Federal District; and 5564 municipalities.

The Brazilian GDP in 2006 was 1.2 trillion dollars.

Two historically related problems still persist in Brazil: high percentage of the population living in poverty—19.3%, around 36 million people—and a high level of social inequality. In 2006, the income concentration measured by Gini index was 0.562.

In the past, experience has showed that economic growth, which didn't redistribute income, was insufficient to create solid domestic markets and to promote the basis for sustainable development. Inequality and poverty are the causes—not the consequences—of the underdevelopment.

The Brazilian Government understands that the social agenda is intrinsic and complementary to the economic agenda. Without human promotion and capacity building, we won't be able to produce a permanent cycle of sustainable growth, one that can bring benefits, in an equitable way, to the entire population.

President Lula considers the fight against hunger and poverty a priority in his administration, and makes great efforts in order to overcome such problems.

Known as Zero Hunger, the Government's strategy ensures the Human Right to Adequate Food and articulates several programs and actions, allowing a greater synergy among public policies. The

strategy creates the basis to the promotion of Food and Nutrition Security and contributes to the eradication of extreme poverty and to the promotion of the sense of citizenship among the population most vulnerable to hunger.

By means of articulating emancipating actions with measures aimed at ensuring rights, such strategy eliminates the false dichotomy between structuring policies *versus* emergency measures.

The participation of and control by the civil society is encouraged in the elaboration and monitoring of the social policies.

The programs are focused mainly upon the family, giving special attention to the issue of territoriality.

The creation of the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger was an important factor to strengthen and to articulate social policies in Brazil.

We are implementing and consolidating two large systems: of Social Assistance, and of Food and Nutrition Security. We transfer financial resources and ensure social assistance and food and nutrition security services to poor families. Besides, we create opportunities to these families.

Those areas are being expanded and consolidated as public policies that ensure citizenship rights—regulated by laws and implemented in a republican way, counting with the social responsibility from the three governmental levels, in partnership with the civil society. The Ministry's budget for 2007 is 13 billion dollars.

The Single Social Assistance System—SUAS—implements a new organization model for the social assistance services and for the management of the social assistance policy in a unified way, all over the national territory.

It is structured in several levels of complexity. In the basic attendance level, the Reference Center for Social Assistance—CRAS—attends the families, providing social and psychological guidance, identifying demands and forwarding them to other complexity levels within the system. In the more complex levels, there are differentiated centers that deal with cases of violation of rights, such as child labor and sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, and take care of the most vulnerable population, such as the poor elderly, children and disabled people, homeless people, etc.

The Right to Adequate Food is institutionally ensured by the joint action undertaken by the three governmental levels and civil society, enforced by the Organic Law of Food and Nutrition Security—LOSAN.

Such Law, elaborated in partnership with the society, approved unanimously by the Brazilian parliament and passed by the President, implemented the National System of Food and Nutrition Security—SISAN, articulating policies that ensures that the population have access to food, with quality, regularity and in adequate quantities.

With this Law, the State must be involved in the food production, commercialization and storage, in food education, in ensuring access to water and food, among other actions.

It includes, among other policies, the strengthening of family agriculture (financing, technical assistance and guarantee of purchase); local installations to facilitate the access to food and water (popular restaurants, food banks, community kitchens, cisterns); storage policies, agrarian reform, school feeding, healthy food, etc.

Such policy is monitored by the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security, constituted by 18 Ministers of State and 36 representatives of the civil society, directly linked to the Presidency of the Republic.

Within both systems (SUAS and SISAN), cash transfer programs are implemented, such as the Continuous Benefit—BPC—which pays a monthly minimum wage (around US\$190) to 2.5 million elderly people who have more than 65 years old and to disabled people who are unable to work and who earn a per capita family income of less than US\$47. The 2007 budget for such program is US\$ 5.8 billion.

The main cohesive Zero Hunger program is the Bolsa Família. It is a cash transfer program based on conditionalities, which benefits around 42 million poor people, providing a basic income to 11.1 million families that earn, monthly, up to 60 dollars per capita. The program transfers each month, on average, 36 dollars to families in situation of poverty and it is linked to the education, health and social assistance services. In 2008, after the extension of age limit for the children of the beneficiary families (up to 17 years old), the benefit for each family can reach up to 88 dollars per month.

Besides the financial resource, families are encouraged to keep their children in school and to fulfill an agenda of basic health care (prenatal and child development monitoring, vaccination), which contributes to the expanding of the social inclusion opportunities.

Bolsa Família ensures access to food and other basic goods through income. It has health and education conditionalities, which helps to break the poverty cycle among generations. And the family is free to use the resource, which encourages the building of their capacities.

Several governmental actions are articulated to benefit those families: electric energy (subsidized costs), priority in the inclusion of young people and adults into educational programs, among others.

We are expanding the actions directed at promoting opportunities of work and income generation, aimed at the poor population: professional qualification, support to the social entrepreneurship and family agriculture, availability of lines of productive oriented microcredit.

The budget allocated for such program in 2007 is 4.6 billion dollars.

The benefit is used mainly to purchase food. Nine in each ten families report improvement on their eating habits; seven in each ten families say that the variety of food consumed has increased, and nine in each ten children eat three or more meals a day.

Researches show positive impacts upon the local and regional economies, creating new opportunities of work and income.

Bolsa Família increases the income of the families in 29.2%. In the Northeast region, in 34.4%. And 57% of the population in the driest and poorest regions receive the benefit.

There was a reduction in the level of income inequality in Brazil. The cash transfers from the social programs were responsible for 28% of the reduction in the inequality level during 1995 and 2004 (Gini index), considering 21% for the Bolsa Família program and 7% for BPC.

Brazil has already achieved the Millennium Development Goal number 1 concerning reducing extreme poverty by half until 2015.

In 1992, 11.7% of the population used to live with less than 1 dollar per day. In 2006, the percentage decreased to 4.7%.

Between 2003 and 2006, poverty levels were reduced by 31.4%. In 2003, 28.17% of the population was below the poverty line, but in 2006, about 19.31% of the population was below the poverty line. Fourteen million people overcame the situation of poverty during such period.

The Brazilian economy has been growing, benefiting everyone, especially the poor. In 2006, compared to 2005, the Brazilians' income increased 9.16%, on average. The poorest 40% had a 12% increase, while the richest 10% had a 7.85% increase.

We are managing to reduce both poverty and inequality, at the same time. The income concentration in Brazil, in 2006, reached the lowest level in the last 30 years, but the number of families in situation of poverty is still high.

According to the Human Development Report (UNDP), in 2006, Brazil was ranked among the 10 most unequal countries in the world, despite the improvements achieved.

Thus, it is necessary to keep going in that direction: economic growth with income distribution and social inclusion.

In order to do so, it is still necessary to make progress towards consolidating policies institutionally, to focus on families and territories, to try to achieve the goals of universalizing promotion and social protection; and to ensure food and nutrition security.

The poorest regions and people need more investments. This also requires a larger integration among social policies, clear and precise goals, transparency, accountability and evaluation of the impacts of the programs.

The impacts of globalization are mediated by the specific strategies from the governments of each country to manage, challenge or alleviate the imperatives of globalization. Thus, the States have an increasing strategic role.

Thank you!