

Minister Plenipotentiary
Maria Teresa Mesquita Pessoa



Federative Republic of Brazil



Thank you, Madam Chair.

At the outset, I want to congratulate Ms Mirna Cunningham for her election, and, through her, to present my respects for all the members of the Forum. Brazil wants to reiterate its commitment to the works of the Indigenous Forum. The continuous participation of representatives from the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI), and from other relevant official agencies is a demonstration of Brazil's respect for this Forum as an important space where member States have an occasion to learn from the Forum and from civil society, especially the indigenous organizations themselves, and also to share shortcomings, progresses, and best practices.

I would also like to register the presence of Deputy Dalva Figueiredo, a member of the Brazilian National Congress who is representing our parliament in this session of the Forum.

Madam Chair,

Brazil is proud to host the Conference Rio + 20, on June 2012, where we hope to welcome you all for celebrating the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Development, whose conclusions and recommendations still are a fundamental guideline. My delegation is convinced that indigenous peoples have a right to be part of the results of development, with full respect for their identity.

The Constitution of 1988 affirms the right of indigenous peoples to learn in their native languages and according to their own methods of learning. To that end, the Government started in 1991 a program of "indigenous education" as a new model for intercultural and bilingual education with cross-cultural curricula aimed at strengthening the culture, language, native teaching and learning processes and social infrastructure as a whole. There are currently 2.5 thousand indigenous schools in Brazil in 24 States of the Federation, attended by 177 thousand students. Between 2002 and 2007 the number of indigenous students grew at a rate of 45%. In the case of secondary education, there was a growth of over 600%. More than 90% of the 10 thousand teachers at the indigenous schools of Brazil are themselves indigenous. The challenge now is to expand indigenous schools and number of enrolled students. With regard to higher education, the Brazilian

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Government created affirmative action programs to facilitate access by indigenous students to public and private universities across the country.

We remain firmly committed to tackling the challenge of poverty and the right to adequate nutrition. The "Bolsa Família" Stipend and "Carteira Indígena" projects are also dedicated to the indigenous peoples. Nearly 56,000 indigenous families are covered by "Bolsa-Família", and we are aiming at increasing the number of beneficiary families. The major challenge facing the government lies, however, in adapting the program to the socio-cultural realities of the various ethnic groups who benefit from the initiative.

The "Indigenous Portfolio" ("Carteira Indígena") initiative, implemented by the Ministry of Social Development in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and FUNAI, supports food security, income generation, and cultural enhancement projects proposed and implemented by indigenous communities themselves, fostering self-determination. More than 80% of the projects were submitted directly by indigenous organizations, and every project involves direct community participation.

Regarding indigenous health, the Brazilian Government established a new federal agency specifically dedicated to healthcare in indigenous lands, which combines all the means made available by western science with indigenous traditional medicine.

All the relevant policies concerning indigenous peoples in Brazil are object of debate of the National Commission of Indigenous Policy, which is composed

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by an equal number of Government officials and Indigenous representatives. The Brazilian Government is opening the space for “indigenous protagonism” in the formulation of policies that affect them.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, there is still much to be done. Brazil remains open to the constructive dialogue and cooperation with this Forum and Indigenous organizations as well as with all member States.

Thank you, Madam Chair.