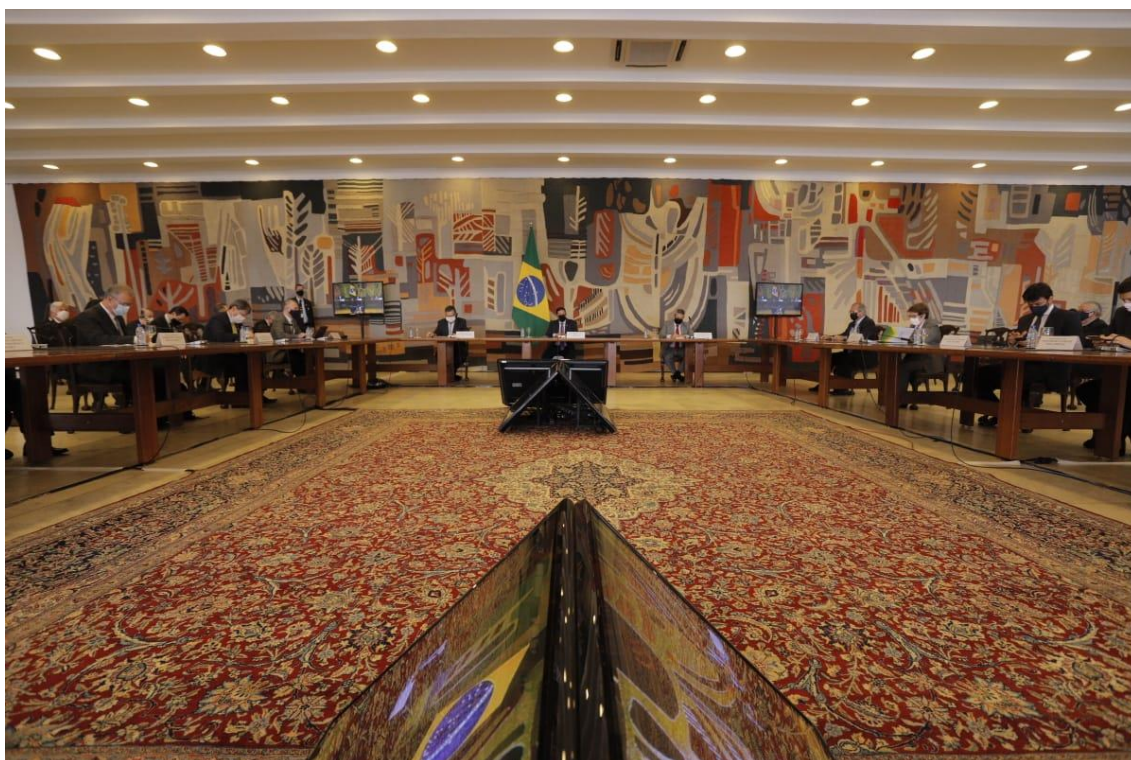


**Opening remarks by His Excellency Vice-President  
Antonio Hamilton Martins Mourão at the  
2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the National Council for the Legal Amazon  
Brasília, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2020**



Distinguished Ministers, members of the National Council for the Legal Amazon,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This week marks five months of the Decree that reinstituted the National Council for the Legal Amazon. The scope of initiatives that were established during this period, the attention it has drawn both in Brazil and abroad and the density of the agenda of today's

meeting confirm the assessment by President Jair Bolsonaro that the Amazon needs a new National policy.

President Bolsonaro has reestablished the Council with the goal of integrating and coordinating governmental actions. It brings back a long-term vision in order to overcome the challenges facing the Amazon, with the highest priority given to fighting illegal deforestation and wildfires.

The diagnosis of the problem is well known. We need to address the underlying causes of illegal deforestation in a way that allows economic freedom to thrive in the Amazon region under the rule of law while in conformity with Brazil's environmental legislation.

Sustainability has become an essential element of the 21<sup>st</sup> century generational pact. This global pledge is even more urgent for Brazil.

We are an agricultural powerhouse providing food security for over a billion people worldwide. Environmental credentials are required by companies and consumers who trust in the quality of Brazilian products.

Unfortunately, a large portion of the World is looking at our country exclusively through the narrow and sometimes misshapen perspective of illegal deforestation and wildfires in the Amazon. We do not deny nor hide information on the severity of the situation; however, we cannot accept simplistic and biased narratives either.

We need to show the world the environmental and human complexities of the region and work together with all who are genuinely interested in the preservation and sustainable development of the forest, bringing security, justice and opportunities for the millions of Brazilians who live there.

Economy Minister Paulo Guedes was harshly criticized for pointing out the connection between poverty and environmental degradation in the Amazon. But how is it possible to engage the population in preserving the forest when there are no legal and lasting economic opportunities to ensure their livelihoods?

The Amazon Council is working with several national and foreign partners – in coordination with the respective Ministries headed by you, ladies and gentlemen – in order to provide answers to those challenges and to take measures deemed more urgent, while simultaneously developing its long term strategic plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We will be evaluated by the effectiveness of our actions, not by the nobility of our intentions. Therefore, we shall answer with work, transparency and results.

The data compiled by the National Institute for Space Research – INPE – leave no doubt about the growth in deforestation since 2012, with a sharp increase last year.

Illegal deforestation is the most predatory face of an unregulated dynamics of land occupation and exploration – a system shaped throughout the decades amidst impunity, poverty and opportunism.

The well-known social and economic hardships in Brazil are magnified in the vast amazon landscape due to poor logistics, limited State presence and, above all, low integration with the rest of the country.

It is necessary to admit the reasons for previous failed approaches so that we can build new viable alternatives, instead of just facing the environmental consequences of the degradation of the Amazon biome.

As if the damage inflicted to Brazil's natural heritage was not enough, crimes against the environment leave our country vulnerable to smear campaigns, which pave the way for protectionist interests to raise unjustifiable trade barriers against our agribusiness exports.

Increasingly, Brazilian companies will be pressed to show the best credentials on environment, social practices and governance.

The environmental image has reflections on a wide array of economic sectors within the country and may compromise its ability to attract investments. Thus, our response requires the mobilization of the entire government and actions coordinated with other Federation members and other branches of the Republic.

Reversing the rising trajectory in deforestation will not be enough. We need to organize, monitor and survey in a more rational and effective way the use and land occupation of the amazon territory. Only then can we provide the suitable business environment and attract the needed investment to promote sustainable alternatives for job and income creation, in what is now called Bioeconomy.

Criminals do not respect quarantines. The surge in the COVID-19 pandemic in the Brazilian territory imposed new challenges and restrictions to broad command and control actions determined by the Amazon Council on our first meeting.

On May 11<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Federal Government launched operation Green Brazil 2 to fight illegal deforestation, wildfires and mining, with the support of the Armed Forces by a Law and Order Act.

The operation offers logistical and security support to the environmental agencies to perform at their best capacities in the Amazon.

It is an urgent measure but it is not an isolated effort. We have the necessary planning to sustain these actions until the end of our term, in December 2022, if necessary.

Right now, our actions are being broaden to prevent wildfires during the Amazon summer, which has already started and will go on until late September.

In the next few days, the Government will enact a Bill averting the use of fire in the Amazon for 120 days. Forest fires are commonly used in the region as a means to prepare the land for agricultural purposes, but it will be prohibited during this period, including in legal deforestation areas. Security forces will act diligently to ensure the efficiency of this Bill.

As we build up fines, arrests and confiscated equipment, the operations should have more dissuasive effect and reduce criminal disposition to put their resources into environmental transgressions.

The continuation of command and control measures will allow us to attack the initial phases of deforestation, which consists of the cutting and removal of the lower vegetation in the months of January and February.

Our actions have become more and more efficient through the integration of data systems from CENSIPAM, IBAMA, INPE, ABIN, ICMBio, INCRA, Federal Police, FUNAI, among others. Intelligence tools have also been used to track and uncover financial operations related to environmental crimes.

We need to strengthen the structure of environmental surveillance agencies so that they can carry out their mission without permanent support from the Armed Forces.

Brazil has a rigorous and modern environmental legislation, a clean and efficient energy matrix, and a sustainable and competitive agriculture.

We cannot allow our country to be portrayed as an environmental villain.

Conservation and development are complementary objectives for an agro-environmental powerhouse like Brazil.

The recent trajectory shows that approaches focused exclusively on the repression of environmental crimes are costly and ineffective in the long run. After seven years of fiscal restrictions, IBAMA and other environmental agencies have seen their cadre of agents decrease and a rise in deforestation.

Previous approaches were excessively focused on repressing deforestation and on partnerships with NGOs to manage the conservation of the forest. They neglected the potential of the business community, rural landowners, local entrepreneurs, investors and other private actors. When public funds started to dwindle, as of 2012, opportunists and criminals acting in the Amazon rainforest saw the chance to expand their activities.

We need to integrate the Amazon to the world and to the Brazilian economy and allow the decent livelihood of families and the good people that have chosen that land to live and develop their vocations. Today, many of these Brazilians depend on a predatory extractive model or on State's assistance.

There are entrepreneurs and private associations interested in exploring the resources of the forests on a sustainable way. For

this, they need guarantees from the rule of law, with a rational regulatory framework and access to justice for all.

To indigenous peoples, we need to ensure protection, inclusion and respect. Protection for those who wish to remain in their villages. Inclusion for those who wish to deepen their integration into the rest of the Brazilian society. And respect for the choice of each person, tribe or ethnicity.

The government believes in the promotion of economic alternatives that mobilize private actors through market mechanisms and sustainable economic opportunities.

Some programs are already in progress for payment for environmental services, low carbon agriculture, the green bonds market, among others.

Among the initiatives, we can mention **the Floresta + project signed by the Ministry of the Environment** in January and recently reinforced by the Illegal Deforestation Control Plan. The 500 million reais obtained from the Green Climate Fund will be used to pay for activities that improve, conserve and recover native vegetation.

The policy for Low Carbon Emission in Agriculture (ABC Plan) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply is another example that combines conservation, emission reduction and economic results. There are several technologies, with emphasis on the recovery of degraded pastures and integrated production and management systems.

Only a small percentage of producers - 1% according to a Mapbiomas study - use herds to illegally open new areas. However, it is this irresponsible and illegal behavior of a minority that undermines the image of our exports as a whole.

With an appropriate regulatory framework and investments in infrastructure, science and human capital, we can change this scenario.

The bioeconomy appears as a way for the Amazon to enter the era of the **knowledge economy**. To make it a reality, we will need to invest in **research, development and innovation** in order to build human capital and develop technologies adapted to the Amazonian biodiversity. The original populations and their traditional knowledge will be the best guides for the researchers. By expanding access, knowledge and the economic use of the Amazonian genetic heritage, we will combat biopiracy, open new opportunities and ensure a fair distribution of benefits.

To leverage this potential, it is not enough to curb illegal deforestation. It will be necessary to make progress in land tenure regulation, territorial planning, economic and ecological zoning, environmental inspection, in addition to improving business environment and sustainable investment.

Only a broad **public-private alliance**, which aligns the actions of governments, companies and investors, can unlock the benefits of payment for environmental services, sustainable agriculture, green investments and several other initiatives, such as ecotourism, fish farming, forestry, and sustainable forest management.

With this vision, the Council of the Amazon is committed to providing the environment for the construction of **a true national pact** for the sustainable future of the Amazon.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We work with **transparency** seeking the best results for the Amazon.

In all the visits I made to the states of the Legal Amazon, I maintained a constant dialogue with several public and private agents, and also granted several **interviews** to the press.

In the last few months, I have met, by videoconference, with local, national and foreign **entrepreneurs**. On these occasions, we have been receiving expressions of support and willingness from companies to contribute to the work of the Council.

With **academics and specialists**, we discussed the methods and results of Operation Verde Brasil 2 with a view to the continuous improvement of its actions.

The State will only be the facilitator of a new sustainable development agenda for the Amazon. Entrepreneurs are the real protagonists.

The governors of each of the nine states of the Legal Amazon are more than members of the Council of the Amazon, they are true partners in this endeavor. Our interactions have been constructive, regular and very productive. I have, likewise, maintained frequent contacts with lawmakers and mayors, who are also willing to work with us.

The federative nature of our constitution as a sovereign state requires that public policies have the necessary verticality so that they reach all Brazilians, without distinction. Only through joint efforts by the Union, States and Municipalities will it be possible to realize this vision of a future of well-being and prosperity for the Amazon region.

Likewise, our Congress is the democratic place of public debate in order to build a consensus that results in normative security for all. Our representatives in the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate share the same concern in preserving and developing the natural and human heritage of the Amazon.

I can say the same about the foreign authorities with whom I have met since the creation of the Amazon Council.

In the international arena, we are strengthening the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization and we have resumed negotiations to reactivate the Amazon Fund, while also exploring other international financing opportunities.

Foreign governments and international organizations have expressed a willingness to cooperate with us for the benefit of the Amazon. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, showed us a

disjointed international system for facing global crises and that urgently needs to be reformed. For example, the United Nations, which celebrates 75 years this year, can be improved in its multiple fields of action as a forum for presenting constructive proposals and not just for discussion and criticism.

Our diplomacy has always allowed us to maintain a dialogue with the most varied political and ideological positions, always guided by the national interest. It will be no different when it comes to environmental issues and the development of our Amazon.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to remind you that we have a President of the Republic fond of the Amazon and fully aware that, in order to rebuild Brazil, we need to face the challenge of preserving, protecting and sustainably developing our forest.

Brazilian society shares this feeling and each member of the Council is aware of the responsibility and commitment that unite us in this mission.

Thank you very much.