

Open Letter from the Forum of Former Brazilian Ministers of the Environment in Defense of Democracy & Sustainability

We are experiencing an unprecedented historic moment of debasement and threat to the democracy established in the 1988 Constitution from the Executive branch, founded by the Constitution.

The federal government's omission, indifference, and anti-scientific action turned the Covid-19 challenge into the most serious epidemiological tragedy in recent Brazilian history, causing irreparable damage to the lives and health of millions of Brazilians. The tragedy would be even greater were it not for the action of the States and Municipalities, supported by the Legislative and Judiciary branches.

Socio-environmental sustainability is being irreversibly compromised by those who have a constitutional duty to guarantee it. The destruction of Brazilian Biomes is advancing at accelerated rates which have not been recorded for over a decade, with significant increases in deforestation in the Amazon, the Savannah, and the Atlantic Forest, while the environmental agencies and federal regulations are systematically dismantled. Indigenous peoples, *quilombola* communities, and traditional peoples see threats to their territories and their lives growing exponentially.

The degrading meeting of April 22nd is a faithful portrait of this mismanagement, with hours dedicated to offending and disrespecting the other powers of the State, without a command word to face the economic crisis or to overcome the pandemic crisis.

The only mention of the pandemic, made by the Minister of the Environment, was not intended to establish connections between the sustainability agenda and the challenges in health and the economy, but, incredibly, to take advantage of the general suffering in favor of the nefarious interests he defends. On the occasion, he confessed to the public what could characterize a crime of responsibility, due to misuse of function and power, by revealing the true plan being implemented by this government, which is to "pass the cattle" on socio-environmental legislation, taking advantage of the *"moment of tranquility in the aspect press coverage, because it only talks about COVID"*. It causes indignation and astonishment that the proposal was not reprimanded in the name of decorum, nor remarks of those present in defense of morals and honor.

Having been responsible for the country's environmental policy for decades, since its re-democratization, we created this Forum to demonstrate that the polarization and radicalization promoted by the government can and must be answered with the union and collaboration between people from different parties and orientations, faithful to the values and principles of the Constitution.

As former ministers of the environment, our specific responsibility is based on valuing and preserving the environment and sustainable development. We learned, however, from the hard experience with the current government, that when democracy, freedom and the Constitution are threatened and/or violated, the first values sacrificed are those related to the environment and human rights.

Without a strong democracy, there will be no sustainability.

Without sustainability, there will be no future for any people.

In view of the above, we request:

- **to the Ministers of the Supreme Federal Court** to ensure the effective compliance of the constitutional principles of preservation of an ecologically balanced environment, a common good that is “essential” to people’s healthy quality of life as well as the independence between the Powers of the State;
- **to the members of the National Congress** that, under the coordination of the presidents of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, they ensure control of the excesses and omissions of the Federal Executive Branch, by not allowing the processing and approval of Draft Laws and Provisional Measures that weaken or promote setbacks in socio-environmental legislation;
- **to the Governors and Mayors** to, given the situation created by the absence of leadership and damaging action by the President of the Republic, remain firm in the responsible confrontation of the pandemic using all available resources, guaranteeing maximum transparency in the disclosure of data and promoting public policies for environmental conservation and sustainable development, blocking the escalation of the destruction of our Biomes; and
- **to the Attorney General of the Republic** to adopt the appropriate legal measures in a firm and timely manner to stop initiatives that stimulate environmental degradation, promoted by the Federal Government, as well as to fulfill the constitutional commitment to impartially and promptly examine complaints of crimes of responsibility potentially committed by the Minister of the Environment in accordance with representations filed to the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic during the Environment Week.

We appeal for an urgent national union in defense of the Constitution and the establishment of a Brazil that lives up to the aspirations of the Brazilian people for a fully Democratic, Plural, and Sustainable Nation.

Brasilia June 10, 2020.

Respectfully,

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