

Brazilian Minister Marina Silva resigns and carries with her the environmental credibility of Lula's Government

The Minister for the Environment has left due to the continuous pressure from the agribusiness sector and the proponents of economic development "at any cost".

São Paulo, Brazil. 13th May 2008. Pressured by the agribusiness sector, its politicians and State Governors, the Brazilian Minister for the Environment Marina Silva today handed her irrevocable letter of resignation to President Lula. She was the last person standing in the Government for the defense of the environment and in support of policies fostering a sustainable development. With her exit, the sector of the government pressing for economic development at any cost, led by Chief-of-Staff Dilma Rouseff, has won a major victory against those who seek to reconcile development and sustainability.

The new minister for the Environment was promptly announced: Carlos Minc, State Secretary for the Environment from Rio de Janeiro and State Deputy from the Workers Party (PT).

In her letter Silva stated that she was leaving because she could no longer put up with the pressures exerted on her to revise the measures recently announced by the Federal Government to fight Amazon deforestation and punish those responsible for its destruction, such as the resolution prohibiting the concession of credits by public and private financial institutions to land owners involved in deforestation or who do not meet with land registry requirements; and the regulation of land titles within INCRA (the National Institute for Land Reform). Amazon politicians, such as the Governor of Mato Grosso Blairo Maggi, and other heavy-weights from the agribusiness sector, have been demanding that the Federal Government take a more favorable position with them and have provoked constant conflicts with the Ministry of the Environment.

"Marina's resignation proves the carelessness with which Lula's government is handling the environmental agenda and the protection of the Amazon", said Paulo Adario, Greenpeace Amazon campaign coordinator. According to him, Marina leaves with all of Lula's environmental credibility, which she has brought to his government over the last five years. "Without her, *king Lula* is completely naked".

According to Marcelo Furtado, Greenpeace Brazil's Campaign Director, Marina's resignation is the chronicle of an announced death. "Lula's government has sent out several signs that indicate that the environmental agenda is a real stone in its shoes: the release of GMOs and the resumption of the Brazilian nuclear program with the announcement of the construction of five new nuclear power plants in Rio de Janeiro and the Northwest region, are only two of the many steps indicating Lula's government commitment to a *no matter what* economic policy that completely ignores key sustainability issues", he said.

A BIG STEP BACK

Marina Silva's resignation takes place one day before the arrival of German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Brazil. Germany is the current host of the UN Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), which was born in 1992 during the Rio Earth Summit and currently had Marina Silva herself as its actual president.

"Marina was expected to hand over the role to the German Ministry of Environment during a ceremony which Merkel was very much looking forward, given her intention to brand her administration as environmentally friendly" said Adario. "However, the country she will be visiting is now very different to the one that existed when she left Germany. With Marina's resignation, that Brazil no longer exists. During Merkel's flight Brazil has changed, and for the worse. It has returned to the 70's when the environment was erroneously seen as a hindrance to Brazil's development".