

United States Senate

December 12, 2022

His Excellency Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva
Gabinete de Transição
Escritório do Presidente Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva
Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil
SCES, Trecho 2
Brasília, Distrito Federal
CEP: 70200-002

Dear Mr. President-elect:

We write to congratulate you on your victory and express our desire to work with you to strengthen U.S.-Brazil cooperation. Our countries have a long history of productive engagement rooted in shared values, interests, and histories. We look forward to building on that foundation to address the many priorities we have in common.

We want to convey our particular interest in working with you to reinvigorate our countries' collaboration on forest protection and restoration. The Brazilian Amazon is one of the world's most important carbon sinks, and its preservation is of vital importance not just to Brazil, but also to the United States and countries around the world. Scientists have warned in recent years that the rainforest is reaching a dangerous tipping point amid escalating deforestation.¹ Your commitment to, and track record of, reversing this trend and enforcing and strengthening Brazil's environmental laws provides the opportunity for us to partner to combat deforestation.

Deforestation accounts for roughly 10 percent of human-caused carbon emissions globally.² As you have consistently acknowledged over the years, preservation of the Amazon is critical not only for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, but also for preventing the most destructive climate change scenarios. Furthermore, nearly half of all tropical deforestation is estimated to be the result of illegal conversion of forest for commercial agriculture.³ When so much deforestation in Brazil and around the world is occurring in violation of existing laws, addressing the issue is a matter of law enforcement and international security.

Illegal deforestation is a practice often associated with corruption, organized crime, and human rights abuses, which disproportionately impacts indigenous communities. It is in our collective interest to ensure criminals cannot threaten local communities and wildlife with illegal clearing, or use the proceeds from their destructive practices to fund other illicit enterprises.⁴ Furthermore, curbing this practice will be economically beneficial for both our nations, as producers who play

¹ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/amazon-rain-forest-nears-dangerous-tipping-point/>

² <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/whats-redd-and-will-it-help-tackle-climate-change/>

³ <https://www.forest-trends.org/pressroom/new-report-illegal-land-clearing-commercial-agriculture-responsible-half-tropical-deforestation/>

⁴ <https://www.fastcompany.com/90698713/a-hidden-major-cause-of-global-deforestation-organized-crime>

by the rules in Brazil and the United States face unfair competition from illegally produced commodities.

We are very encouraged by your campaign pledge to tighten protections against illegal deforestation of the Amazon.⁵ We note the progress you made in significantly curbing deforestation during your previous tenure in office and your longstanding commitment to environmental protection.⁶ Your track record is an indication of your ability to restore robust enforcement of your country's Forest Code when you assume the presidency. We also appreciate the challenges you face in reversing a multi-year trend of lax law enforcement amid opposition from powerful interests. We are eager to work with your administration and the international community as you undertake this crucial work that has implications for the entire global community.

We look forward to engaging with you and with our counterparts in the National Congress of Brazil to find areas for cooperation on forest restoration, environmental protection, national security, and mutual economic prosperity.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ
U.S. Senator



MITT ROMNEY
U.S. Senator



CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
U.S. Senator



TODD YOUNG
U.S. Senator

⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/31/lula-brazil-amazon/>

⁶ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-bolsonaro-election-loss-could-cut-brazilian-amazon-deforestation-by-89/>