



## Forest Day 3

Sunday, 13 December 2009

Radisson Blu Falconer Hotel and Conference Center

Copenhagen, Denmark

Coinciding with UNFCCC COP 15

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### **The speech given by Eduardo Braga, Governor of Amazonas State, Brazil**

I would like to thank you Sir Nicholas Stern. I'm sorry I arrived here late. I flew from Amazonas to here directly and unfortunately got here in the middle of your speech. But I was so interested to listen to you. I think you have given an opportunity to many people to understand better and better how to face climate change and global warming and have been an inspiration at universities all over the world, so congratulations to you Mr Nicholas Stern. I would like also to thank Mr Hilary Benn, Minister of the Environment from the UK, and his words about Amazonas state and the job that we have been doing in our administration. I'd like also to congratulate Mr Pham Khoi, Minister of Natural Resources from Vietnam.

When I arrived here I was thinking that I'd have to explain a lot about the importance of the standing tree to climate change. After the speeches that I've heard I understand that maybe the reason that I'm here is to give a testimony as to how the local communities could achieve this challenge all over the world. How the people from the Amazon, from the rainforest, can be committed and be supporting the standing trees. Because in my state, since 2002, we cut deforestation by 75%. We were deforesting something like 1.5 thousand square kilometres a year, and this year the number's come down to around 400 square kilometres. Which means that it is possible, but we need to understand that poverty, and lack of education, and standards of living are issues that we have to face together if we want to win this war against climate change.

Another point is that the people who live by the rainforest have always been accused in the past as villains in this matter of deforestation and all the global warming effects that we have had all over the world. Actually they are victims of sorts. In 2005 we had a huge drought in Amazonas. We saw big rivers almost disappear in less than three months. And this year, at the beginning of 2009, we had the biggest flood in the whole history of the Amazon River. And just three weeks ago we lost millions of fish because they died, and they died because we had a combination of two different phenomena at the same time: We had another huge drought, together with El Nino, and that made a strong and different movement in our rivers, and the temperature changed in the surface and in the bottom of the water and killed a lot of fish. And those who don't visit the Amazon don't understand that more than 100,000 families depend on fishing to live, to feed the kids.

Once I was talking about sustainable development programs with local communities and one mother came to me and asked, "Governor, are you asking me to care about this tree if my kid is

crying because it's hungry? I need to feed my kid, and if to feed my kid I need to cut that tree, I will take care of my kid."

Everywhere in the world is the same. If you come to Germany and ask one mother to kill her child to save a tree, I'm not sure whether that mother will choose to keep the tree. It's the same in the United Kingdom, it's the same everywhere. All mothers are going to take care of their kids. It's the same in the Amazon; it's the same in the rainforest. How have we cut 75% of deforestation? Because we took care of the local communities. Because we were wondering: how can we give to these local communities better income every year, better conditions of education, better health, better infrastructure, logistics, minimal prices for their products? How can we create a sustainable development programme, and make them see perspective in the future? Taking care and understanding a new management with nature. That's what we did in the Amazon, we created a green free trade zone, we gave tax benefits, credits, technical assistance, we established minimal prices, and made an arrangement to produce and to care about the forest. And in the same way we work with fish farming, although we didn't work with cattle, because it's true; you need one square hectare to have just one cow in cattle farming in the Amazon.

But on the other hand, we have 20% of the fresh water preserved in the whole world, and yet we don't have even 0.1% of the production of fishing in the Amazon. Something's wrong. It's wrong because we don't give the right policy to develop the rainforest the right way. So at the bottom I would say finally the international community is understanding the importance of the standing trees to face climate change. Finally the international community is understanding that the standing and conserved forests are natural land that we cannot lose if we want to find answers for the future generations. Finally the international community understands that climate change is a matter for everyone, from the north, from the south, from the east, from the west, rich, poor, white, black, Indians, everyone. Everyone will be touched by global warming. And everyone is going to lose. So what we are doing now in Amazonas is paying a new program, called *Bolsa Floresta*, for the people who live inside the protected areas. And we are paying them 30% of their per capita income per year to not increase deforestation.

And we created new targets for our state. And Amazonas state is the largest state in Brazil. Our area, just to give you an idea, is three times the size of France. That's how big we are. We are 16 times bigger than the UK. Unfortunately we are poorer than the UK. Once Prince Charles came to Amazonas to visit us to better understand the rainforest, and I said to him, "well if you were born here your kingdom would be 16 times bigger, but for sure won't be 16 times richer than it is". But the question is if you establish a fund with environmental services that the standing trees provide, through REDD+ mechanisms, and through a mechanism like *Bolsa Floresta*, make sure that this funding is going to reach the local communities, and the local communities with such funds will get better education, better health, better conditions to produce in the sustainable development program, then we achieve a new moment for the future generations. Then we will believe that the standing forests are going to survive. Then you'll understand that we have a chance to balance the world. We need soya bean for sure; we need to feed a lot of

people in the world. But we also need the forests to regulate the climate, and also to give answers to the future. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

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