The USNDB Policy Paper on Brazil pressures the Biden-Harris Administration to take a stronger stance against Bolsonaro’s Brazil policies on climate and social injustices

WASHINGTON, DC / February, 2021 – The policy paper ‘RECOMMENDATIONS ON BRAZIL TO PRESIDENT BIDEN AND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION’, written by human rights and environmental experts convened by the U.S. Network for Democracy in Brazil (USNDB), was published and widely disseminated in the Brazilian press on February 3, 2021. The document outlines key policy suggestions to the Biden-Harris Administration as the government re-evaluates its relationship with Bolsonaro’s Brazil. Mainly focused on social and climate justice and rule of law issues, the document has gained traction in Brazil and abroad.

As of February 3, 2021, the document had been received by Juan Gonzalez, the Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere from the National Security Council (who has been vocal against Bolsonaro in the past), members of the Council of Economic Advisers, and the White House. It was also sent to the Department of the Interior and to the future Secretary of Labor, Marty Walsh. The cabinets of Representatives Susan Wild and Raul Grijalva revised the document before it was published. With the support of these allies, it has also been widely disseminated within the Legislative branch.

Given the relevant endorsements and contributors, which included more than 100 scholars from various American universities, including Harvard, Brown, Columbia, UC Berkeley, and Princeton and important organizations, such as Amazon Watch, Greenpeace U.S., and the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), the document has received significant attention in the Brazilian media.

The policy paper has been discussed and highlighted on: BBC Brasil, which published a large exclusive about it and featured it in its Podcast; Folha de S. Paulo, both online and in print; O Globo, both online and in print; Estadão, both online and in print; Época; Portal UOL; Yahoo; Veja; Correio Braziliense, as a report and a blog post; O Mundo em Meia Hora Podcast; Poder 360; Istoé; as well as on Twitter pages of important journalists. It was also debated at a live show on GloboNews. Within the United States, the dossier was disseminated by Brazil-focused
news websites Brasil Wire and The Rio Times, on Reuters, and commented by journalist Dom Phillips. The dossier was also featured on Deutsche Welle through a lengthy interview with James Green, USNDB’s National Co-Coordinator, and on Global Voices, which published a lengthy interview with Juliana Moraes, Executive Director of the USNDB's Washington Brazil Office, and in the Italian newspaper DIRE.

In the past few weeks, following the release of the policy paper, there have been tangible effects on the United States and the international community's relationship with Brazil. The USNDB document was cited in Folha's coverage of a meeting held between US ambassador to Brazil, Todd Chapman, and Vice President Hamilton Mourão about the Amazon. The OECD committee on environmental policy suspended discussions about upgrading Brazil's status in the organization due to its environmental policy. A Scandinavian Fund excluded companies linked to Amazon deforestation. Biden's Special Presidential Envoy for Climate held a virtual meeting about the environment with Brazilian ministers Ernesto Araújo and Ricardo Salles. Per the Policy Paper, the USNDB recommends the Biden Administration to meet and discuss potential climate solutions with Indigenous Peoples and civil society organizations that have long been protecting the Amazon and other biomes.

President Biden's Press Secretary was asked about the document live at a press conference and commented on the Brazil-U.S. relationship going forward, stating that, although there is a "significant economic relationship," the Administration would be willing to criticize Bolsonaro’s approach to human rights and the environment.

Given President Biden's climate plan and his desire to promote a strong relationship with Brazil, the question now is whether there will be substantive pressure on the Brazilian government. Meanwhile, there has been an increasing interest by Members of Congress on environmental related issues. In late February, the House of Foreign Affairs Committee held a staff briefing with Sônia Guajajara (APIB), Daniel Brindis (Greenpeace, author of our Policy Paper’s chapter on Climate) and Paulo Abrão (former IACHR, author of our Policy Paper’s chapter on Human Rights). In early March, a new bill was proposed in Congress to curb the importation of commodities that originate from illegally deforested land.

The official February 3, 2021 press release that accompanied the publishing of the document is available at the USNDB's website.

The full policy paper text is available here.