

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil in New York City

September 20, 2023

President Biden. Well, Mr. President, it's great to see you again. Welcome to New York.

You know, when I hosted you at the White House in February, you said that we have an obligation to leave the next generation a better world, and I couldn't agree with you more. And Brazil and the United States are meeting that obligation together; at least, that is our intention. We've begun it, and we're going to continue.

We're working lockstep to tackle the climate crisis, including mobilizing hundreds of millions of dollars to conserve the Amazon and the critical ecosystems in Latin America. And we've advanced our work together through the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation to promote inclusive economic growth.

And the two largest democracies in the Western Hemisphere are standing up for human rights around the world and in the hemisphere. That includes workers' rights. And I'm honored we're going to launch a new Partnership for Workers' Rights in just a few moments.

So, Mr. President, thank you for being here today. And I look forward to continuing to work together to build a better world, including during your G-20 Presidency this year, which I'm anxious to work with you throughout the year.

Thank you.

The floor is yours, sir.

President Lula. President Biden, first of all, I would like to say to you, sir, the satisfaction—a great pleasure it is for us to have a meeting on the part of the Brazilian Government with American Government.

I believe that this is a historical moment that should serve as a role model when we look to the geopolitics in the world and we perceive that the opportunities are becoming narrower and narrower, and democracy is becoming more and more—it's more and more in danger, because the denial of politics have made that far-right sectors try to occupy the space due to the denial of politics around the world. This already happened already in Brazil, and now it's starting in Argentina, and it's going on in many other countries.

The fact that we're getting closer, Brazil and U.S., and this initiative that was proposed by President Biden that we should build a work plan so that we can offer to our youth, to our people, perspectives of a decent job, of a more skilled and qualified work—trying to benefit from the climate energy transition—the energy transition, trying to take advantage of the AI. It is necessary that we should present a concrete proposal to arouse hope in civil society that lives as working families.

I followed your speech at—during the Inauguration. And then afterwards, I followed another of your speech. And I've never seen before a U.S. President talk so much and so well of the workers as you talk as referring to the workers. And this was—the Italians—the labor federations asked for me—asking me about your speech, and the Italian labor movement and other in Europe was—the U.S. President most advocated for the workers' rights.

And this is a perfect combination, because I come from the labor world, and I think that labor has and work has become precarious work. Salaries are very low, and the workers work more and gain less.

And this idea from you, Mr. President, to present a joint proposal that we can start to discuss and go and take it to the G-20, I believe this initiative is very important for Brazil. And I believe it's also important for the U.S., but it's also important for the rest of the world.

So I believe that there is one thing that is important that's going on in this political juncture in the world. We had the return of democracy in Brazil. And we built all the political alliances, and we had to really build them again. And we will chair the BRICS process in 2025. And we will be—chair the G-20 next year. And we'll have COP30 in 2026. All that, we can do it sharing with the U.S. Government.

And so I believe that it is extremely important that we can work together. I believe that it's important that the U.S., North America should see what's going on in Brazil in this historical moment of ecological transition, changes in the energy matrix, and the potential that our country has in terms of investment in wind power, solar power, biomass, biodiesel, biofuels, ethanol, and green hydrogen. So there is a prospective—a joint work that is an exceptional situation for Brazil and the U.S.

So, at this meeting here, Mr. President, I believe that it's more than just another bilateral. It's a faith relationship that we're building here and a new era for the U.S.-Brazil relation, amongst equal partners, a sovereign relationship, but of common interest in the benefit of the working people in your country and in my country.

President Biden. Mr. President, I couldn't agree with you more.

I know I'm not supposed to speak again, but my dad used to have an expression. When I was growing up, my father had an expression. My father was a—did not have a college degree, but he was a well-read man, and he worked very hard his whole life. He'd say: "Joe, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about self-respect. It's about being able to look your children in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay,' and mean it."

Everyone deserves an equal shot. And that's why we've tried to build an economy—and from a different perspective, Mr. President, from the middle out and the bottom up, not the top down. Because when the middle does well, everybody does well. Working-class folks have a chance to move up, and the wealthy still do fine, as long as they pay their taxes.

But at any rate—so I'm really looking forward to working with you. I really am.

President Lula. And, President, we are always trying to convince the rich people that the less poor exists in humanity—the fewer the poor, it will even be better for the rich. So poverty and inequality is not of the interest of anybody.

And so I believe that this gesture that we are achieving here in the heart of the U.S., trying to arouse expectations for high hopes.

I worked 27 years inside a plant. I've seen unemployment. I've experienced unemployment. I experienced—I should say, yesterday my Labor Minister visited the trade unionists from the U.S. that are on strike, and they had a very good meeting. And I think that this is a golden moment for us and the possibilities that we have ahead.

And we're arousing for a dream—for those kids that are 18, 19, 20 years of age—this youth that has no perspective. I think that this gesture of ours could be a service for hope so that people can start to believe that, yes, it is possible to build another world. Another world is possible with

more fraternity, with more solidarity, more—with more fairness—and that humanity goes back to humanism, that people should demonstrate more solidarity.

In Brazil, we always say the following: It is necessary to make that hope will overcome fear. This is the motto, and this gesture here is—we are arousing hope for millions and millions of Brazilians and Americans that need to have an opportunity to live their lives, to be a winner, and to build their families with decent—through decent work. So that's why it's extremely important.

You know that I'm a President that has not carried a university degree. The only thing that I have is a vocational training degree. And I believe that this gives me a different kind of vision of the world, where a part of the Brazilian class in Brazil had—doesn't manage to see.

And so that's why we decided to develop so many social inclusion policies and we're trying to reach a bar that will take people to have life with more dignity. And in the 8 months that we're in office, we are already restoring democracy procedures in Brazil. We have already recovered 42 social policies—social inclusion policies.

We have already drafted an investment plan. For the first time and under a democratic regime, we just passed a tax reform in the House of Representatives. And I think that this will allow that Brazil can have a quality leap forward.

And I believe that the relationship between the U.S. and Brazil would be improved and that we can behave as friends seeking a common objective: development and improving the lives of our people.

President Biden. You know, the Secretary of—I know the staff is going crazy. They're supposed to say—we were supposed to ask the press to leave a long time ago. But I want to say one more thing.

Our Secretary of Treasury pointed out, they did—the Treasury Department did a significant report and pointed out that—and this is a fact—that when organized labor is engaged and involved, everyone does better. The wealthy do better. Everyone does better. When you eradicate poverty, when you bring people up to a living standard that's real, everyone benefits. The whole economy benefits.

And that's why I sent you the best Ambassador in America to make sure you're all set.

At any rate, we better get down to business, I guess, here.

Q. On the UAW, Mr. President—[inaudible]—to visit the picket line?

Q. [Inaudible]—go to the picket line?

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. at the InterContinental New York Barclay hotel. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Brazil Elizabeth Frawley Bagley. President Lula referred to Minister of Labor Luiz Marinho of Brazil. President Lula spoke in Portuguese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

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