



**ANTÔNIO HAMILTON MARTINS MOURÃO**

*Vice-Presidente da República Federativa do Brasil*

Brasília, November 27<sup>th</sup> 2020

Distinguished members of the European Parliament,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'A. Mourão', written over a light blue grid background.

I am writing in response to your letter dated November 26. I appreciate your openness to work together to achieve our common environmental goals and it is in this constructive spirit that I would like to address some of the concerns raised in your letter.

The Brazilian Government upholds the values of freedom, democracy, civil and political rights and social well-being. Our commitment to Human Rights is enshrined in our Constitution, which also ensures freedoms of expression and organization, as well as the protection of vulnerable groups. We firmly believe civil society plays a critical role for the development of our country and for the improvement of our Democracy. The engagement of civil society is even more necessary in the least developed regions of our country, such as the Amazon states. You can rest assured that the Brazilian Government has no intention to constrain or control civil society organizations that are **legally** working in the Amazon or anywhere else in our country.


Our Government has put forward an agenda for the protection, preservation and sustainable development of the Amazon region. The reestablishment of the National Council for the Legal Amazon, in February, and the launching of the Operation Green Brazil 2, in May, are part of the effort to build a comprehensive State policy for the Amazon. We acknowledge that illegal deforestation is still unacceptably high and our government is mobilizing all available resources to fight environmental crimes in the Amazon.

Recently, a specific sentence regarding the control of NGOs was leaked from a compilation of suggested actions submitted for analysis and rectification by Council members. National and international media repercussion raised unfounded concerns among several of our partners in Brazil and abroad. The proposal to control NGOs does not correspond to our thinking, neither to the activities carried out by the Amazon Council. Such concerns are unfounded.

The fact of the matter is that unsafety, informality and lack of information make very difficult for civil society organizations, private sector or governmental agencies to work in many regions of the Amazon. We need to improve conditions for the work of all stakeholders for the benefit of the Amazon and its people. For this reason, the Council is considering measures to improve the institutional framework for the work between government agencies, private sector and civil society in the Amazon. Our view is that all stakeholders will benefit from a more coordinated and organized institutional framework for interaction with the Brazilian Government. Our goal is to achieve greater effectiveness and transparency in the dialogue between government and local stakeholders, and there is no intention to limit or constrain freedom of civil society and private actors that are **legally** working in the Amazon.

Measures under consideration by the Council are part of our broader commitment to strengthen the Rule of Law in the Amazon region. We believe civil society organizations are essential partners in our goal to create a more sustainable and inclusive future for the Amazon. Furthermore, the Council has engaged with European Commission representatives in Brasilia to improve and expand our cooperation portfolio for the benefit of the Amazon and its people. We welcome the opportunity to advance a constructive dialogue with the European Parliament to present the work carried out by the National Council for the Legal Amazon and to clarify any misunderstandings or unfounded concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Antônio Hamilton Martins Mourão