

Independent Commission on Multilateralism

Keynote address by H.E. Mr. Celso Amorim

“Fragile States and Fragile Cities”

May 8, 2015

Excellencies,

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd,

Ambassador Puri,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for the warm invitation. It is a difficult task to define and recognize a fragile state. What makes a state fragile? Fragility is dynamic.

Currently, I am a member of the High-Level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises established by the United Nations Secretary-General. Certainly, health expenditure is an indicator of state fragility and during our first meeting, the most shocking revelation was the great disparity of health expenditures between countries.

For example, a country that spends only \$9.00 per capita on health per year, is a fragile state. There is no coincidence that the three countries suffering from the Ebola epidemic are under consideration by the Peacebuilding Commission, I see a clear correlation between how much a country spends on health and its state of fragility.

However, if we want to focus on one single source of fragility, inequality is the biggest one.

No matter the size, even large countries can be in a fragile state. Brazil is roughly half the size of South America, it is the largest economy in the region, and shares borders with 10 countries. However, authoritarian regimes make states fragile and for a long time, Brazil had a military government.

International politics played a part in the consolidation of our democracy. The transition of Brazil and Argentina to civilian governments happened almost simultaneously. One of the areas of cooperation was nuclear energy: the two countries decided to establish a system of mutual inspection, which was the basis for the future agreement with the Atomic Agency in

Vienna. The fact that these two countries decided to cooperate strongly in several areas also contributed to the consolidation of democracy in both countries.

Brazil made its second strong step towards eliminating its fragility by achieving economic stability. The first President that was democratically elected was impeached. I became the Foreign Minister of Brazil during the interim government led by Itamar Franco and Fernando Cardoso became its Finance Minister. It was during Franco's government that Brazil's economy stabilized and this was another turning point.

The third key point was the election of President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. He had been a labor union leader. Lula came from humble beginnings. However, I would like to highlight two important aspects of President Lula da Silva's legacy in the consolidation of Brazil's democracy: first, he reduced inequality and poverty in Brazil, through the *Bolsa de Família*; and second, in its foreign policy agenda, Brazil started asserting itself in the world beyond Latin America.

Brazil has always been a very unequal society. The rich are very rich and the poor are very poor. Inequality has been a stumbling block for Brazil but it is improving. The Bolsa de Família was at its beginnings a controversial proposal. It offered cash transfers to women, under three conditions:

1. Children need to go to school;
2. Children need to be vaccinated;
3. Pregnant women need to receive prenatal care;

Through this highly successful program, approximately 35 million people were lifted out of absolute poverty.

In terms of foreign policy, Brazil lost its timidity and started to be more present in the world. In South America we worked strongly for integration. We now have a South American Defense Council and we just created a South American School of Defense.

If there is one challenge the United Nations has to focus on at its 70th anniversary is inequality. This is really what affects most countries inside and between countries. Inequality has to be present in our minds.

Speaking of reform of the United Nations, I was here at its 50th Anniversary as Ambassador, then for its 60th Anniversary I was Brazil's Minister of Foreign Affairs, and at the 70th Anniversary, I am here now and we have seen little UN reform. I hope the efforts of the Independent Commission of Multilateralism prove fruitful.

Thank you.