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## New and Empowered Environmental Front in Brazilian Congress

by Paula Alvarado, Buenos Aires on 02.26.07



A group of 256 Brazilian deputies placed their signs in a manifest and re-launched the Environment Parliament Front (Frente Parlamentar Ambientalista) in the chamber, a unit that had been inactive for four years. The front was also presented with an agreement with the SOS Mata Atlantica Foundation to calculate and offset all the Parliament's carbon emissions by planting trees. The manifest that the deputies from all parties signed has 17 points and its main focus is to control the accomplishment of current environmental laws and international agreements, to impel new projects and measurements, and to supervise that environmental programs destined to specific projects are carried out (all 17 points in the extended). Though the front doesn't imply that all 256 legislators commit their votes to environmental projects, according to its coordinator, deputy Sarney Filho (Green Party), this initiative is a sign that the actual legislature will be more sensitive to environmental defense. According to him, the front's first challenge will be to approve a package of measurements that includes the adoption of a carbon emissions reduction goal for Brazil and the demand that all wood purchased through public licitations is certified, among others.

Via [ioman01](#) from [Hugg](#)

Picture: Environment Ministry Marina Silva, Environment Front coordinator José Sarney Filho, and SOS Mata Atlantica Foundation director Mauro Mantovani sign the agreement to offset the Congress' carbon emissions.

According to The Tamas Blog (TB), this sudden interest from the Congress in environmental issues shouldn't be surprising, as "in these last few weeks an ACNielsen poll has shown high awareness among Brazilians of global climate change, Brazil's Environment Minister was honored by the UN as an 'Earth Champion' for her battles against deforestation, Carnival parades have recycling and climate change themes, and the Brazilian government has asserted that it is doing more to combat climate change than most other developing nations". This specialized blog about the evolution of Environmental & Health Policy in Latin America also separates the new Environmental Front from its previous initiative: "judging by its new membership and leadership, the manifesto pledges, the launch event and the vocal support of some key NGOs, it appears that this Front does not intend to fade away quietly", it says.

Analyzing the Front's composition by parties, the TB claims that "most of the party leaders in the Chamber are not in the Front; nor is the Chamber's President, Arlindo Chinaglia" but adds that "Minority Leader Julio Redecker [PSDB - Rio Grande do Sul] is a member, which does add some political weight" to the group. While the Green Party is the only one with its entire bench in the front, the Workers Party (president Lula's) has 60% of its deputies in, the Democratic Movement has 45% of its benchers, the Social Democrats 48%, and the Liberal Front 32%. Another point that the TB highlights is that only Sao Paulo (economic center of the country, also a nucleus for important Latin American regional headquarters for industry and commerce) has over half its bench represented in the Environment Front, while Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais (industry, commerce and mining centers) are not better represented.

Passing on to the front's success possibilities, Keith R from the TB says that to move forward, "the Front will have to focus first on a few select goals that they can all agree on and where legislative success is achievable in the near-term, while avoiding raising expectations too high", but agrees that "even if they do not succeed in getting their legislative agenda adopted, the Front's creation, its high profile and the political commitment embodied in signing their manifesto, sends a clear message: environmental issues have moved to the political front burner in Brazil".

The Environmental Front 17 goals manifesto:

1. To fight in defense of the principles from Carta da Terra (Earth Letter), final document from the Environment and Development Conference by United Nations in Rio de Janeiro, 1992;
2. To fight for the correct implementation of Agenda 21, including the disposals from the Official Development Assistance - ODA document;
3. To fight for the implementation of the Convention about Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, and to assure all countries respect the commitments established in them. Gradually, to negotiate more effective international norms to protect the environment, prevent and revert climatic alterations;
4. Fight for the implementation of the Biological Diversity Convention, even for the fair distribution of the benefits resulting from the use of the genetic patrimony and associate traditional knowledge;
5. Fight for the implementation of the rest of the environmental-related international agreements signed, and also for the formulation and negotiation of other agreements that might be necessary in the area;
6. Fight over the approval of the legislative propositions that may perfection the actual environmental legislation, once the necessary adjustments that might be important after a discussion in are done;
7. Interfere for the maximum cooperation among the State and society in order to solve environmental issues;
8. Accompany the conception and development of long-term projects, as well as their budget needs;
9. Reject any attempt to impose backward steps in environmental law;

- 10. To conceive economic instruments to help the reach of the goals established by the National Environmental policies;
- 11. To conceive legal mechanisms that aim to ensure the strict respect of the principles of prevention and of the user-payer;
- 12. To accompany the conception and implementation of the different public policies related to the environment, to ensure their compatibility with the National Environmental policy;
- 13. To work for the correct implementation of the National Hydric Resources Policies Law, the Environmental Crimes Law, the Environmental Education Law, the National Conservation-Units-System Law, and all the other conquers achieved in the field of environmental legislation.
- 14. To warrant that the resources from the Intervention Contribution in the Economic Domain (CIDE), incident over the fuels marketing and importing, be applied according to the Constitutional Amendment N 33: especially in projects related to the recovery of areas degraded by the petroleum and has industries, and also in alternative transportation infra-structure programs.
- 15. To warrant that the funds collected from the hydric resources use is applied in the same hydrographic source in which they were generated, in projects oriented to the conservation and improvement of the environmental quality;
- 16. To accompany the implementation of public work and of the work financed with public funds, assuring the honor of environmental law;
- 17. To act as a catalyst for society demands in what comes to environmental issues.

Additional information via [Socio Ambiental](#), [The Temas Blog](#), and [Prensa Latina](#)

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