

## Brazil Vows to Keep Fighting First-World Trade Barriers

Contributed by Lourenço Melo  
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The trade barriers that need to be overcome and the effort required to reach new agreements don't diminish Brazil's optimism. This was the statement made January 4, in São Paulo, by the Minister of Development, Industry, and Foreign Trade, Luiz Fernando Furlan, who reported the figures on last year's trade balance.

"The key word for 2005 is new records."

He estimated that Brazil will export US\$ 108 billion in 2005. In 2004, the country exported 32% more than in 2003 and broke a historical record in the month of December.

Exports in 2004 totaled US\$ 96.475 billion, while imports amounted to US\$ 62.779 billion, resulting in a trade surplus of US\$ 33.696 billion.

According to the Minister, the month of January, 2005, will mark the beginning of a series of very important meetings for the future of Brazil's exports.

The most significant items on the Brazilian diplomatic agenda in the coming months are the signing of Mercosur accords, the struggle to break down trade barriers and protectionism in the World Trade Organization (WTO), and negotiations to create the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

In the Minister's view, Brazil's participation in world forums will continue to represent a tireless effort to overcome protectionism and trade barriers in the richest countries.

In Geneva, Switzerland, on January 18, 19, and 25, Brazil will attend special meetings of the WTO's dispute settlement organ.

On January 29, the 2005 World Economic Forum will take place in Davos, also in Switzerland. Concomitant with this encounter, there will also be a business meeting with the participation of Brazilian government officials and foreign investors.

Furlan recalled that the Presidents of Brazil and Argentina, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Néstor Kirchner, have pledged themselves to strengthen the Mercosur.

The creation of the Southern Common Market Parliament will be a priority this year for the Mercosur Joint Commission. An agreement signed last month by Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay determines that the Parliament will be established by December, 2005.

Nevertheless, the Mercosur may encounter problems in its dealings with China, when the temporary presidency of the economic bloc is transferred to Paraguay, which doesn't maintain diplomatic relations with Beijing.

The goal of the majority of Mercosur members, however, according to Furlan, is to set up unrestricted agreements to gain a foothold in markets that still offer a lot of opportunities and are practically unaffected by protectionist policies.

Translation: David Silberstein  
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