

Brazil Collects US\$ 119 Billion in 2004. A Record.

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Brazil's Federal Revenue agency collected a record amount of taxes and contributions in 2004, to the tune of US\$ 118.555 billion (R\$ 322.555 billion). In December alone US\$ 11.988 billion (R\$ 32.620 billion) were collected.

In nominal terms, last year's amount represents an 18% increase in comparison with 2003, when the government received US\$ 100.462 billion (R\$ 273.358 billion).

In the December-December comparison, revenues grew 17.40% between 2003 and 2004, according to Federal Revenue secretary, Jorge Rachid

Just last month the Lula administration announced that the Federal Comptroller-General's Office (CGU) wanted to toughen the fight on corruption in Brazil.

To this end, it is promoting a series of activities, such as the launching of a booklet to orient citizens who wish to denounce acts of corruption and the inauguration of the Transparency site, as well as proposals for changes in the law.

One of the projects being studied by the government is a law to make illicit enrichment a criminal offense. According to the Federal Sub-Comptroller-General, Jorge Hage, some international conventions recommend that countries categorize illicit enrichment as a distinct crime.

"The idea is to make illicit enrichment a distinct crime, irrespective of proving the origin of the resources through which the public servant acquired this wealth," he affirmed.

Another of the CGU's projects being examined by the government will allow various government agencies charged with functions of control, investigation, and oversight, such as the Federal Police, the Public Interest Defense Ministry, and the Federal Revenue Office, to share restricted information.

"At present, a government agency whose function it is to investigate and which possesses information obtained through a judicial order authorizing the invasion of privacy cannot pass it along to another government agency that also exercises oversight functions. This is absurd. Each agency must return to the courts to request a new authorization," he affirmed.

For Giovanni Quaglia, the Brazil and Southern Cone regional representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), it is necessary to invest in the campaign to combat corruption.

"To do an effective job, institutions must be adapted to the size of the problem, and the size of the problem, not just in Brazil but all around the world, is quite significant. It would be worthwhile regarding this as an investment," he commented.

According to Quaglia, the money spent on the training of professionals in the fight against corruption and organized crime "provides excellent returns." "You achieve better control of the way government funds are applied and make sure they end up paying for the services the population requires," he added.

Quaglia also defended the creation of a code of conduct for public servants, for them to spurn corrupt practices, nepotism, preferential treatment, and discrimination. In his view, the private sector should adopt accounting and auditing standards that facilitate the job of oversight agencies.

As for the Judiciary, he affirmed that it is necessary to reform and protect the independence and integrity of the courts

and public prosecutors. "It is necessary for the judicial system to be strong and fair, the public prosecutors to be ethical, and for there to be an adequate working infrastructure," he said.

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