

Brazil Asked to Vote Less Against Israel in the UN

Contributed by Irene Lôbo
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Brazil and Israel concluded a formal agreement, on Sunday, May 29, that establishes principles for a permanent political dialogue and the exchange of information between the two countries.

The decision is part of a memorandum signed by the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, Silvan Shalom, and the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim, who ended a three-day visit to Israel, yesterday. Amorim was the first Brazilian chancellor to visit Israel in the past ten years.

At the meeting the chancellors also discussed Brazil's position in votes concerning Israel at the United Nations (UN).

According to the advisory office of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, the Israeli Minister asked Brazil not to cast frequent votes against his country.

Amorim replied that Brazil does not vote against Israel, but in accordance with the principles it defends of non-intervention and national self-determination.

Shalom also indicated that he considers Brazil a possible candidate for a seat on the UN Security Council. According to the Brazilian Ministry, Amorim believes that Brazil is capable of playing a more active role in the peace process between Palestinians and Israelis, since it has access to both sides in the conflict.

During his trip to Jerusalem, the Brazilian Minister visited the Holocaust Museum (Yad Vasgen) and participated in ceremonies to honor the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis during the Second World War.

He was also received by the President of Israel, Mosche Katsav. They mainly conversed about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, following Mahmoud Abbas's victory in the Palestinian presidential election in January.

Another objective of Amorim's trip to Jerusalem was to discuss the enlargement of economic agreements with Israel and Brazil's promise to start the process for a future Israeli partnership with the Mercosur.

These topics were discussed at a meeting between Amorim and the Israeli Minister of Industry and Commerce, Ehud Olmert.

Over the past two years there has been a substantial increase in trade between Israel and Brazil. Bilateral trade grew from US\$ 505 million in 2003 to US\$ 715 million in 2004. Last year Brazil was Israel's second biggest trade partner in the Americas.

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