

Brazil: 'It's Natural to Enrich Our Uranium at Home'

Contributed by Celso Amorim and Colin Powell
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Brazil has major uranium reserves, and it's only natural that we do not want to have to send our uranium abroad to be enriched. That just doesn't make sense. When Brazil adhered to the Nonproliferation Treaty we actually accepted the package deal.

Brazil's Foreign Minister Celso Amorim remarks with US State Secretary Colin L. Powell

FOREIGN MINISTER AMORIM: (in Portuguese) Let me tell you first of all that we are very pleased with the visit by the Secretary of State to Brazil. As the Brazilian press knows, he has been going through a long program in São Paulo, with business sectors, with young people.

In Brasília, the Secretary met with the President of the Republic, which was to be a courtesy call, but the conversation was so interesting that it went on for an hour and 15 minutes, I believe, with simultaneous rather than consecutive interpreting. So, it really was an hour and 15 minutes of conversation.

During that encounter the subjects of common interest were discussed, including the economy of both and the politics of both countries, an exchange of information and in it there were some more general issues.

Particular attention on regional issues, as well, such as Haiti, Venezuela and other situations in the continent, and the cooperation that the US and Brazil have carried out, continue and will continue to do.

During the encounter we had here after that, we went into some details on subjects that the discussion with the President had brought up. Specifically on Haiti, where we had specific discussions.

It's a very important area. Brazil has become particularly involved because we have an expectation of really being able to help solve this situation. But, of course, we need support from the international community.

And a few other regional issues that were discussed, as well, including aid to the countries that went through recent problems, such as the natural disasters in Grenada, where I believe the Secretary will be visiting soon.

And we also discussed issues like the United Nations reform in a broad sense. We had an exchange of ideas on that. And also, in general terms, we had an important discussion on the Middle East and Iraq. That was the essence of our conversations.

There may be one or two other points I might not be remembering right now. I also recall that the Secretary of State was very positive in his expressions to our President Lula on several of Brazil's initiatives, and President's initiatives.

And not just in foreign affairs, but also in economic and social fields, including the global struggle against hunger. Naturally, he brought the greetings from President Bush, as well.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Thank you for making this a very interesting and informative day for me.

I am very pleased to be back in Brazil, and as the minister noted I had good meetings in São Paulo and here in Brasília. And I thank President Lula especially for giving me so much time.

We did have a fascinating discussion on economics, politics, regional matters, matters of hunger, matters of poverty.

I'm pleased to be here to convey the best wishes of President Bush, but also through my speech at the American Chamber of Commerce this morning in São Paulo, to touch on a number of issues of mutual importance to our two countries, the fact that we are two great democracies in this hemisphere.

We have so much in common, and our relationship has become so improved in recent years, and we want to do everything we can to make sure that we stay in this steady upward path.

As the minister noted we talked about hunger, we talked about poverty, we talked about the situation in Haiti and I expressed my thanks to the government of Brazil for the leadership roll they are playing with the UN in providing the military leadership for the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti. It's a challenging mission, and Brazil certainly stepped up to the challenge.

We also talked about things having to do with the IAEA, the nuclear issue that has come up in the course of the day. And I reaffirmed to the President and to the Minister that the United States has absolutely no concerns about Brazil doing anything with its nuclear program except developing power in a most controlled, responsible manner.

And, of course, that is a requirement of the Brazilian constitution, and I am confident that Brazil will be able to work out any problems that might exist with the IAEA, hopefully when the IAEA team visits later in the month. We also talked about possibilities with respect to an Additional Protocol.

I guess part of my day was enlivened by being able to talk to young people; young people in São Paulo, young people here in Brasília – Youth Ambassadors –

Brazilian young people who have gone and spent time in the United States. Some of them spent time with me last year, and the other group spent time with my deputy, Mr. Armitage, this year: wonderful young people who are the future generation of Brazilian leaders.

And I'm pleased that we have such an exchange program, which is further indication of the strength of the relationship that exists between the United States and Brazil.

And so, Mr. Minister, I thank you for your hospitality today, and I thank the Brazilian people for the hospitality and friendliness they have shown to me during the course of the day. Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you. I have a question for both Secretary Powell and Minister Amorim. Mr. Amorim, could you please share with us as best you can how you plan to handle the visit of the IAEA inspectors who are due here later in the month?

What will it take for you to allow them to inspect the centrifuge facility at Resende? And, what is your thinking on Brazil's signing, acceding to the Additional Protocol?

Secretary Powell, some arms control experts have expressed concern that Brazil's differences with the IAEA might allow Iran and North Korea additional leverage to play with the crucial issue of inspections of enrichment facilities.

(cross-talk)

SECRETARY POWELL: I'd be delighted to go first. I don't have those concerns. I don't think Brazil could be talked about in the same vein or put in the same category as Iran or North Korea.

North Korea threw out the IAEA inspectors and it is violating its obligations. We believe it has some nuclear weapons already and has had them in some small number for a period of time.

We can't be sure but that is our best judgment. And they are saying that they are reprocessing plutonium for the purpose of having the material to make nuclear weapons, and as we all know, they violated the agreements they had made previously under what is known as the agreed framework by moving in the direction of enriching uranium as another way to get to weapons material.

In the case of Iran, Iran has been not forthcoming with respect to what it has been doing and we have seen the IAEA prying information out of Iran and our judgment is that Iran's program is not just for power, but is also designed to move in the direction of a nuclear weapon.

In the case of Brazil, this is simply not the case. And the issues between Brazil and the IAEA, I'll let the Minister speak to, but I think they are issues that are resolvable.

They're not unlike similar problems that have arisen with other countries in the past that the IAEA has dealt with. And I do not believe that whatever arrangement that the IAEA and Brazil will come to would in any way give either North Korea or Iran any additional bargaining power with the IAEA.

FOREIGN MINISTER AMORIM: (in Portuguese) Part of the question has already been answered. I don't need to go into the technical details and I will be answering in Portuguese with the permission of the journalist, because we do have a major Brazilian audience here. If you have any doubts, I will try to verify them, though.

I won't go into the technical details, because I have no expertise to do that. But, it's a simple matter. Brazil has nothing to hide in terms of its uranium enrichment process except for the technology that Brazil has acquired, and which Brazil naturally wishes to protect.

It's perfectly possible, and this has been discussed very productively in Vienna. I, myself, was on the telephone with the director of the Atomic Energy Agency, Mr. El Baradei, who was very pleased with the contacts that he had made with our technical people.

And, therefore, I believe it is perfectly possible to conciliate the objectives of the Atomic Energy Agency, to give them the certainty that the entire enrichment process is only for peaceful purposes, that there is no deviation of uranium, while at the same time protecting the Brazilian technology.

Specifically how that's to be done has to be discussed between the Agency's technical people and the Brazilian authorities in the sector, specifically at the Resende plant that will be visited.

It is in our interest to solve this problem, because we want to put the Resende plant into operation, as we have economic needs. Brazil is such a huge country, we cannot do without any source of energy.

Brazil has major uranium reserves, and it's only natural that we do not want to have to send our uranium abroad to be enriched, to then have to come back to Brazil. That just doesn't make sense.

In addition, without going into the merit of other specific situations, while I can say I said to the Brazilian press recently, there are two ways that our internal revenue services can deal with the citizens, this is suspicious citizens: then they'll go in and look at their bank records and tap their phone.

But, if the citizen is a citizen above any suspicion, then you deal with them normally. You look at their income file and see if everything fits. That's what we plan to do when we believe that we will be able to move in that direction.

Now, in terms of the Additional Protocol, I'll repeat one thing that I've said many times: Brazil has never said that it would not sign, but there is a process of negotiation here I think that we will soon come to an agreement on the Resende plant. And that will help consolidate the subject for the future.

But, I want to reiterate, as I said to Secretary Powell, that when Brazil adhered to the Nonproliferation Treaty we actually accepted the package deal. There are three basic elements there: nonproliferation, as such; the possibility of peaceful use of nuclear power with no restrictions, unless there is some specific suspicion on the country but now Secretary Powell has said that there is none; and, third, concrete steps towards disarmament.

Within that spirit we will continue to work on these matters. And, I'm certain that as in all the other situations, Brazil has always shown its desire to cooperate with the global goals of nonproliferation and of disarmament, and will continue to work in that direction.

QUESTION: (in Portuguese) Good evening and my question is for both of you. There are several issues where the US and Brazil do not share exactly the same position. We'd like you to mention some points here.

The UN reform: is it clear whether the US supports or does not support Brazil as a candidate to a permanent seat on the Security Council. This morning Secretary Powell said that Brazil is a strong candidate that has good credentials.

Second, on Iraq, there are divergences here. I'd like to know if Brazil would be willing to participate in an international force to participate in Iraq. What is the position on that?

And more specifically on inspections in Brazil whether Secretary Powell has insisted on Brazil in signing the Additional Protocol on atomic power?

And, finally, on hunger, there's been some criticism by the US about Brazil's position. Was that discussed? And how will that move into the future? Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER AMORIM: (in Portuguese) I can start on this one. I think issue three has already been answered very well. I know it's your agenda that you got from your desk, but that was answered. If Secretary Powell would like to add anything he will feel free, of course.

He'll be able to say exactly what he said. I think that what we discussed is reflected in my answers already, as well, on the first question. On the other three you're presuming we disagree on the first one because we have not had enough discussion to see whether we disagree or not.

The US is a country that has interests in supporting the UN and multilateralism. I've heard favorable expressions towards reform.

Brazil has not asked for explicit formal support from the US at this point, because we have ears that are capable of hearing and understanding and we know that this is a moment when we are waiting for the report to come from the Secretary General's panel, that will be studied by all.

And it is very positive for us to hear what the Secretary of State has had to say this morning in terms of our country. We believe that is no formal commitment to support, but it is a manifestation that we are very interested in.

The third one I already answered. What was the second one?

QUESTION: Iraq.

FOREIGN MINISTER AMORIM: (in Portuguese) On Iraq, we've several times had conversations on Iraq. And concretely I asked how the organization was going on the possible conference, and Secretary Powell gave me some explanations.

Brazil will always be interested in making a contribution, a positive contribution, to the movement on these problems. They know our position. The more, the greater the participation of the UN, the greater the possibility of having the participation of all kinds of possibilities.

We did not foresee any military participation for several reasons; we're concentrating on many other areas. Of course, in the future, humanitarian actions in cooperation for all reasons we will be in favor.

But, the broader the participation of the international community and the broader participation of the UN as such in moving into Iraq's future politically, the greater we'll have the possibility of more countries participating.

You did not ask, but I also mentioned our willingness, if it so happens, for us to somehow contribute. We have no illusions about our power, but sometimes countries with less power can do things that more powerful countries can't.

On the Middle East, where we've nominated an Ambassador, a Special Envoy, we've got an envoy in Ramallah in addition to our embassy in Tel Aviv. So, we have productive relations with both sides.

And then the fourth question on hunger. There is more and more hunger and the longer the questions go on, the more our hunger. And the longer the hunger goes on, the more the hunger grows.

The Secretary of State had very positive words to say in terms of President Lula's initiatives. President Lula in New York expressed his thanks for the presence of the Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, at the meeting.

We had already had conversations, the two of us, also, including the presence of the US Envoy. We do not need to agree on all the details. It's good that we not agree on everything because it is out of these nuances and different shades of opinion that we have dialogue.

For example, on Venezuela a year and a half ago, if we were totally in agreement we would not have found a solution, and would not have contributed to a solution--because it was the people of Venezuela who actually found their solution. And it's in that spirit that our dialogue continues.

SECRETARY POWELL: The minister has talked to these four points rather thoroughly, so I'll be very brief. One, on the first point with respect to the UN, you accurately quoted my statement this morning, and that's our position.

We all have to wait and see what the panel recommends, and then make judgments as to how to move forward on the panel recommendations. And Brazil certainly would be a solid candidate for membership if that's what the panel so recommends.

On the IAEA, I think we've answered that one rather thoroughly. And the minister noted that we did talk about Iraq, and the minister expressed an interest in Brazil participating in any dialogue that might be held, any conferences that might be held.

The contribution of troops to support the UN or anything else is a sovereign matter for Brazil to decide, but as the Minister noted, it's unlikely they would do that. But they are doing so many other things, and I once again thank Brazil for what it's doing in Haiti.

And then with respect to hunger and poverty, we fully share, as I have said in the course of the day, President Lula's concern about these issues, and his desire to do something about them.

We have had a 100% increase in our development assistance money in the four years of President Bush's administration, and on top of that we're putting in place the Millennium Challenge fund, with a major contributor to alleviation of hunger through our food programs around the world.

And so, we have commonality of interests and a commonality viewpoint with President Lula on this issue.

Where there may be a disagreement – and there is a disagreement frankly – it's how one goes about putting more resources into it and funding it; some sort of global tax or the creation of a new international facility of some type.

We have reservations about those ideas because we don't think they are workable. But, we will continue to discuss these issues because we have the same concern.

There are people on this earth who are in need of food every day, every single day. And there are people so trapped in abject poverty that they will never see success in their lives, nor will their children, and we all have an obligation to do something about that.

QUESTION: The Middle East has just been mentioned, so I'd like to ask you about Gaza and the ongoing Israeli offensive. How concerned are you that the violence will continue to escalate? And being Israel's top ally, what pressure, if any, is the United States bringing on Israel to actually end the offensive?

SECRETARY POWELL: Israel has been under assault from rockets coming out of Gaza. These are rockets that are fired by terrorists who are not committed to the Road Map; they are doing everything they can to keep the Palestinian people from achieving the state they richly deserve, and which President Bush wants to use the Road Map to acquire for them.

Prime Minister Sharon has responded to these attacks in acts of self-defense. We have said to the Israelis that they have to be measured responses and they have to be proportionate, and we hope that whatever they are doing will be brought to an end quickly.

We would not like to see an expansion; we would like to see the action brought to a conclusion, we all would, because what we really want to focus on is Prime Minister Sharon's plan to disengage from Gaza and to disengage from, initially, four West Bank settlements as a way of getting the process moving forward.

And we would hope that the Palestinians would direct their energies toward reform of their government and empowering a Prime Minister who can be a responsible interlocutor with the international community, especially with Israel, so we can go about the process of getting in place a political organization and a security organization prepared to take over Gaza and run Gaza upon Israeli disengagement in a way that nobody has to worry about rockets coming out of Gaza directed towards civilian population in other parts of the area, which just keeps this conflict going on and on and on.

And I hope that the Israeli operation will end soon and that we will see the end of these rockets coming out of Gaza and destroying the hopes of the Palestinian people and all of us for peace and for moving forward on the Road Map.

FOREIGN MINISTER AMORIM: (in Portuguese) I know that in this case the question was directed only at the Secretary of State, but I think it is relevant to call to mind that the Brazilian administration has issued an official note expressing the Brazilian stance at the matter at hand.

Especially we condemn all acts of violence and above all as it regards excessive military operations which has lead to the death of both civilians and children.

From a broader standpoint, we do support the peace Roadmap, including the Quartet, and we believe that is pretty much the path, the middle ground, to be found.

Because as long as one side waits for an end to all violent acts from the other side, nothing will happen. Some degree of courage will be required mutually in order to make sure that that peace process moves forward. And we will plan to as instrumental as possible, as much as we can.

QUESTION: (in Portuguese) My question is about Iraq and my questions is addressed to the U.S. Secretary of State. The concerted action...behind the concerted action already on the way, is there the idea of setting up some kind of Friends of Iraq-like group?

And something that is not very clear to me as regards Haiti. More specifically, Minister Amorim, did the US ask for any kind of concrete help from Brazil on Haiti.

And Secretary Powell, when you refer to the possibility of offering or extending military help, could you be more specific? Does that also entail financial support of any nature?

FOREIGN MINISTER AMORIM: (in Portuguese) Well, let me try to take the first question first, because that may somehow cast the light on part of the question.

Let me talk about Haiti first. Obviously we did discuss Haiti. It remains a source of concern. President Lula de Silva himself made comments on Haiti, and I myself referred to the need for swift deployment of all troops in Haiti as promised to the MINUSTAH mission.

And, the US Secretary of State...I believe I'm not breaching any secrecy here...the Secretary indicated that they have volunteered very promptly to help along these lines.

With regards to economic assistance, this is not so much a matter of allocating funds.

Because after all, funds are already allocated, and very generously so, by the way, very handsome amounts of money allocated by countries such as the US and a number of member states from the European Union.

The matter to be tackled now, and I believe that is where the US can perhaps prove instrumental in helping us, but Brazil, too, can play a role, as the role of the Secretary General himself, as well as the role to be played by the Special UN Representative to Haiti, by finding ways to cut down the red tape and the process involved in it, to make sure that the funds get to Haiti and concretely so through works, and through actions that will be beneficial to Haiti.

And we were sharing a very concrete example, actually; very often the different institutions or bodies, because of the natural care and the judicious nature of dealing with public funds, there are very detailed procedures and processes.

Both of us have been to Haiti and know that we have to start out the work by cleaning up the streets and covering the holes out in public lanes, and so forth.

And, that wouldn't really require a lot of red tape. Perhaps we would be able to employ people, and if that doesn't really work to the effect of actually solving the problems, at least we relieve parts of the problems that people are having on a first-hand basis.

Let me just add a brief word, which doesn't really have to do with your question but is somehow related to it. We also discussed, although this is not a specific matter on the agenda with Secretary Powell, but we did discuss the WTO.

And I believe I have received very good expressions of support as regards the way that Brazil and the United States have worked together, in tandem and in parallel without any exaggeration and it has ended up leading to the agreement that we reached in Geneva, which will, in turn, allow for a continuity of multilateral negotiations.

And I think that is an important milestone that is key and essential, that we continue to work in that constructive spirit.

SECRETARY POWELL: Last year there was serious disagreement in the United Nations Security Council about Iraq and what to do about the problem of Saddam Hussein and his regime.

The United States, with like-minded allies, undertook military action. After the regime was removed from power, the international community came back together again in a series of resolutions over the past year, culminating in UN resolution 1546, which put the whole Security Council and the international community on the side of the Iraqi people.

On the side of the Iraqi people, to allow them to create a government of their own, to have elections that will legitimize their government, and encouraging the international community to provide support to the multinational force and economic support to Iraq.

So, Iraq has friends. The international community wants to help the Iraqi people. The international community has spoken out against the type of terrorism and violence that we see on our screens every day, committed by former members of the old regime.

Committed by terrorists who do not want to see Iraq have free elections, who do not want to see the Iraqi people choose their own leaders, who want to go back to the past.

We cannot allow that to happen. And so, the multinational force will continue to work with the Interim Iraqi Government as they build up their security forces to go after these remnants of the old regime and these terrorists.

And we will do everything we can to work with the Iraqi Interim Government, our coalition partners and the United Nations to get ready for elections at the end of January 2005.

Iraq is reaching out to its neighbors, so it will be having a conference at the end of November...towards the end of November, where its neighbors will come together and share thoughts and views as to how the neighbors can help the Iraqi people through this difficult time.

The G-8 will also be represented at that conference and we're looking for others who might be included in such a conference to show support of the international community.

I think there are many ways in which the international community is showing its friendship to Iraq and we are satisfied that we are capturing that expression of friendship in a suitable way now without creating another new body. Thank you.