

## Lula Urges Brazilian Mayors to Do Much More

Contributed by Keite Camacho  
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Brazil's President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, said today that, prior to his Administration, mayors had a hard time being received by the President.

"In Brazil, the governors were received, but not the mayors. And we want to treat them equally," Lula declared.

He said that resources that were previously transferred to the governors for distribution to municipal governments are now being sent directly to the mayors, without political intermediation.

Lula took part in the closing ceremony of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), a global body that represents cities.

Its purpose is to encourage the exchange of experiences with programs to combat poverty and promote social inclusion.

The meeting was held in São Paulo and was attended by mayors and government representatives from various countries.

The UCLG, which is based in Paris, has 106 members who represent 100 thousand cities on all continents.

According to Lula, at least 90% of the demands made by Brazilian mayors in 2003 got attention from the Presidency of the Republic.

He said that a department was created in his Administration just to take care of the interests of municipal governments.

The President affirmed that the relationship between the federal and municipal governments needs to become increasingly close.

According to him, the mayors can help define the federal budget and the policies the federal government should implement.

In his speech, Lula said that the government has good relations with mayors from all parties.

He emphasized the importance of federal investments for basic sanitation in the municipalities.

"In just 19 months in office, what we have spent on basic sanitation is 14 times great than all that was disbursed from 1997 to 2002," the President observed.

According to Lula, between 1995 and 2002, 300 thousand children died in consequence of diseases caused by the lack of sanitation in the large metropolitan areas of Brazil.

"Taking care of basic sanitation is the same as taking care of health. For each R\$ 1 (US\$ 0.35) that is spent, R\$ 3 (US\$ 1.06) are saved in the area of health. It is cheaper to prevent people from falling ill than to heal them afterwards," he affirmed.

The President also remarked that, if the mayors do not assume responsibility for concrete steps in the campaign to combat poverty, the difficulty will be all the greater. "The mayors can do much more," Lula stated.

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