

Lula: 'Brazil Won't Play a Supporting Role Anymore!'

Contributed by Mylena Fiori
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Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, addressing an audience made up of dozens of automobile industry executives at the opening ceremony of the 23rd International Automobile Show in São Paulo, Brazil, said that it is time for Brazil "to stop being called a country on the road to development."

And the President was emphatic: "We are mature adults, and we want to be treated immediately as a developing country that is capable of competing head-to-head with any of the world's economic powers."

The President affirmed that the Automobile Show, the largest of its kind in Latin America and the fifth largest in the world in the number of vehicles on display, "demonstrates our country's potential."

The show, which was opened to the public October 21, expects to receive 500 thousand visitors through October 31.

"Here I am running into companions with whom I had serious disagreements in the decade of the '70's," Lula recalled, referring to the period in which he was a metalworker and union leader in the ABC region of São Paulo.

The President said he believes in an evolution of businessmen's and workers' bargaining sensibility.

He recalled the crisis the automobile industry faced in the '80's - when hundreds of workers were fired -, and rejoiced in the country's current employment figures.

Lula recalled that 1.6 million new jobs were created between January and September of this year.

"It is very encouraging and demonstrates the recovery of Brazilian industry," he affirmed.

Before Lula spoke, the president of the National Association of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (Anfavea), Rogelio Golfarb, announced that the goal of the sector is to attain two million vehicle sales on the domestic market by the end of 2006.

1.13 million units were sold between January and September of this year. Lula considered this a low target.

"I think that you are being pessimistic when you think in terms of two million," the President commented.

"The automobile industry cannot imagine that it is difficult to attain the mark of two million car sales on the domestic market," he added.

Lula also spoke about Brazil's export potential.

"Brazil has definitely decided that it will no longer play a supporting role in international politics."

According to the President, the country has deep respect for the United States, the European Union, Japan, and France.

"But the world is larger than these markets. It is up to us to get out and sell the best of what we have."

The President noted the fact that Brazil has created an image of being an exporter of raw materials.

"We are the ones who have to show what we are capable of producing," he affirmed.

"Nowadays we export airplanes and cars that run on alcohol, gasoline, and natural gas. We have soybeans, corn, and sugar cane, but we have products that contain high technology and high added value. We have no problem in competing with any other country in the world."

Between January and September of this year, the Brazilian automobile industry shipped 462.9 thousand vehicles abroad, more than for the entire year of 2002.

Agência Brasil

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