

## Brazil Tells the World How It's Battling Desertification

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Brazil presents today, March 16, two of its contributions for fighting permanent soil degradation. The presentation is happening during the 5th session of the Revision Committee on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention for Combating Desertification.

The first is a report on the implementation of the National Program to Combat Desertification (PAN). The second is a world map of the areas subject to desertification, as informed by the secretary of Water Resources at the Brazilian Ministry of Environment, João Bosco Senra.

Representatives of the 191 signatory countries of the UN Convention for Combating Desertification, which has been effective since 1996, are participating on the meeting, which will last until Wednesday, March 21, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The committee is in charge of assessing the way in which signatory countries implement policies against this problem.

Elaborated over the course of three years by the Ministry of Environment, the report about the PAN became an international reference, according to the secretary, mostly because it was done in a participative fashion, counting on the integration of the federal and state-level governments.

"The report presents the actions that the Brazilian government as a whole has been developing in the Semi-Arid region and in areas subject to desertification. This resulted in an improvement in the living conditions of the population, and is contributing to reduce pressure on the environment and on the process that leads to desertification," Senra explained.

The world map, in turn, outlines the profile of Brazilian regions subject to this type of degradation. These areas concentrate in the southeastern Brazilian states of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo, and in the nine northeastern states, which together encompass more than 1,400 municipalities undergoing a process of desertification, according to the Ministry of Environment.

"These maps are key for the country to be able to move forward in this respect. They approach aspects of environment, demography, the issue of human development, agricultural production and cattle raising, as well as extraction activities in the region," João Bosco Senra said.

According to the secretary, the main cause for desertification in Brazil is inadequate use of soil and waters, which contributes to accelerate the erosion process. According to the ministry, over 1 million people in the world live in arid and semi-arid regions, and 32 million Brazilians live in areas that might become desert.

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