

## *Interview*

### *H. E. Valter Peçly Moreira, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Brazil to Hungary*

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**Introduction:** In spring, 2015, the ICRP conducted an interview with Brazil's Ambassador to Hungary, H.E. Valter Peçly Moreira, about the Hungarian-Brazilian relations, the relations between Brazil and the European Union, and the politics in Brazil. He gave us his insights of the mentioned topics, thanks to the personal experiences he collected through his long career of diplomat. Therefore, we focused onto the bilateral relations between the countries, the cooperation of Brazil with the European Union, and onto the politics of President Dilma Rousseff in several topics.

*Before we get started with questions about Brazil, could you please say some words about your professional career? Where were your previous postings? How did you end up in Hungary? What are your impressions about the country?*

I was very young when I started my diplomatic career, I was 21, and so I am 45 years experienced now. Starting from the beginning, I served the Buenos Aires' agency.

Then in Bonn in Germany, at that time, it was still Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). After that I worked in Geneva in Switzerland, Asuncion in Paraguay and finally I became ambassador which is the highest rank in diplomatic relations. I worked in the OAS (Organisation of American States) based in Washington DC. This organisation is composed

of 44 countries, and I hope that, with the warming of relations between Cuba and the United States, we will soon be 45 again. As an ambassador, I then worked in Asuncion Paraguay from 2004 to 2008, and then as a General Consul in London until 2010.

I came back to Brazil for almost three years, where I was working as the Head of the Foreign Minister's Regional Office in Rio de Janeiro. Since 2013, I am the ambassador in Hungary. I am now 66, almost 67, and as we have to retire after 70, I have 3 years remaining as a diplomat.

I love being here. I never went to Hungary before my designation as an emissary. In my long career, I have never worked with this part of the world. I was a little bit surprised, in a good way. It is a nice country and Budapest is a wonderful city, very beautiful indeed. My wife and I are very happy here.

*What are the characteristics of Brazilian-Hungarian relations (be it economic or cultural relations)?*

Hungarian-Brazilian relations are traditionally very good, we never had any problem, and since 2010 we can see a visible and notable expansion of this relation which coincide a little bit with the government's opening policy here first with Eastern countries (Middle East and Asia), and then they extended the opening with South Africa and Brazil of course.

Since then, it is very clear how our relations were improved: we have many exchanges or visits of the highest level. Recently, the president of Hungary was here with the vice-president of Brazil.

We also organise a lot of visits between ministers of our two countries and our bilateral Economic Commission met three times in this building.

We have a big scholarship program called "Science without borders and we [the Brazilian government] sent here [to Hungary] more than 200 students since 2012, however only in the scientific field. It has been surprising because in the beginning, Hungary was not a part of this program and two years later, Brazilians suddenly started to come in Hungary. These exchanges can increase first of all the human relationship, because Hungary is not a very well know country in Brazil and now we can see the augmentation of tourism here with a lot of Brazilians. Every day when I walk back to my home I can hear Portuguese in the street. We

were a little bit afraid at the beginning about our students' behaviour and the potential troubles they could cause and we would have to solve, but finally they were really nice, they fitted really well although they like parties a lot. They behave themselves and we only see them for passports.

*In which fields should they be improved?*

The policy in Hungary is to increase trade which coincide with our policy, instructions has been given last year to have a special care with trade. Relations in science are really good too; the Minister of Technology was here with the Minister of Agriculture and Fishing. Besides these fields we are trying to improve relations in culture, with the visit of the Minister of Education.

Ministries made memorial of understanding, but also with organisations like APEX in Brazil (which is our expert entity and chamber of commerce) and banks here in Hungary.

Lastly, Hungary just inaugurated its House of Trade – which is an intermediary for companies to get in touch and do business – in Rio, in the continuity of the other openings all over the world.

The human relations are fundamental too, and all these students coming here must improve that field and help us building strong bonds between our two countries.

*Can we talk about major changes or milestones in the recent years? What can be said about the relations between Brazil and the European Union?*

They are very good. Europe is a major root of our own population; a lot of people come to Brazil among the countries including Hungary. There is a big community of Europeans in Brazil, about 100,000 people.

Moreover, since 1960, the European Union and Brazil established political relationships so relations between both regions are quite old, already 55 years, and in 2007, these relations were reinforced by the establishment of a mechanism partnership between both regions. Negotiations for an agreement between associations are now conducted.

There are also several meetings in every year on the highest level; the last one was in 2014 in Brussels. However finding agreement is not always easy, and are mainly conducted in agriculture; On the 10th of June in 2015, a CELAC meeting will take place between several presidents of European Union and Dilma Rousseff in Brussels. And of course, the European Union is an important economic partner besides China and United States.

*I am not talking about economic relations specifically but rather scientific and cultural relations. Is there any kind of cooperation in this field?*

There is a strong relation because we have a strategic partnership, especially in science and technology but there are many fields of cooperation, for example agriculture or trade. But the partnership between the European Union and Brazil is quite recent, so they organise meetings to create groups of research. Moreover, the European Union provides funds for specific researches in Brazil; they have ideas and they establish projects that they try to implement.

*Staying in Europe, but talking about another country, we know that Spain is the main European investor in Latin America. Do you think the declining potential of the Spanish economy could have an effect to its economic relations in the region? How could it affect the Brazilian economy?*

It is true that we could think that, but, according to the studies of ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), it is actually the opposite. Spain is the second investor and it even increased its investment in 2013 and 2014, while these two years are not really good for Brazilian economy. Therefore, I assume that the crisis in Spain does not affect negatively Brazilian economy. I do not know about other Latin American countries but I would say it does not affect. Latin America is Spanish speaking so we have a natural connection. I think that the crisis affects people in Spain – everybody knows that – but maybe not our business, our banking policy and services.

*Economic relations between the People's Republic of China and nearly all Latin American countries have been in a boom phase recently. What are the main tendencies and recent developments of these Sino-Latin American economic relations in Brazil's context?*

China is really important for Brazil. We have good relations with this country; we belong to the same group, the BRICS that gathers Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Therefore we are doing many meetings together, which are led by different member countries each year. Last year, the president of China visited Brazil for a BRICS meeting and then we organised a meeting for the Chinese president and all Caribbean presidents.

Just on month ago (in May 2015), the Prime Minister of China was in Brazil for an official meeting and they signed 35 agreements and announced investments for 53 billion US dollars, so the relations with China are really important in every field including the launch of satellites.

We also have a joint project with China and Peru to build a road from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, and, as our three countries are involved, China might participate in the project by financing a part of the infrastructures and by providing workers. It is not a simple thing because they have to cross the whole continent so they have to be really careful about people who live here and cautious about the environment and make a lot of studies about it. This is an old project, we always wanted to connect the Atlantic and Pacific, but hopefully, we will see it happen eventually.

*Could you say some words about the CELAC? How would you describe its role in international relations? President Dilma Rousseff has proposed that it should expand its functions and seek increasing the trade relations between its member countries. Do you agree? What have been achieved so far in this matter?*

CELAC is a group of Latin American and Caribbean countries, therefore the United States and Canada are not part of it. It is a relatively new organisation. It was created in 2010. Its aim is to fulfil common projects in many subjects; the countries are in charge to organise everything. This organisation is becoming really important: it has its own "personality" and will have its next meeting on 10 June in Brussels. It has been created to unite all the Latin American and Caribbean countries in opposition to OAS, where I have been ambassador, and which is willing to gather all the American countries apart from Cuba; but as relations

between Cuba and the United States are better, this aspect will not be so important anymore. The idea is to get closer and closer to integration, a physical one, but also to improve cooperation in many fields, policy and of course to create projects together.

This organisation is really important for us because other Latin American countries, which are Spanish speakers, always had a kind of cooperation and Brazil was in the past a little bit apart from it. But for 15 years, it changed because we put all of our efforts and focused our foreign policy on the integration of South and Latin America. Things are now changing, I hope for the best for Latin America.

About the trade relations, our priority is now to invest in infrastructures. In June Dilma Rousseff is launching a series of investments in port, railroad, energy and other things we do not know as it is not public yet, and we hope that European Union and Hungary will be interested in it too.

*Talking about President Dilma Rousseff, has Brazil's external policy changed since her election? If yes, how so?*

Since her election, the president's foreign policy is really something that remained steady with some principles. They have a precise idea and it does not change too much but it changed in certain ways and she is continuing on the path of President Lula as they are representing the same party. Maybe a bit different, but regarding last year, her policy is quite the same as her predecessor. Lula opened a lot of embassies and she is trying to keep on improving the relations with those countries.

I believe that the football World Cup and the Olympic Games will certainly help our foreign policy because those kind of international events always help to give a good image to the world and, as journalist were really impressed, I think it can only bring good consequences to foreign relations, and moreover, sport is really important to gather people.

*Last, but not least: we know that she is the first woman in your country holding the office which can be considered – I think – as a very positive first sign of a new trend in the world of politics, a still-masculine field. Has something changed since 2011, her election as president?*

*Is there – for example – more female deputy in the Brazilian National Congress? Are there any signs that Brazilian women have been more interested in politics, political career?*

Women rights increased since 15 years, an example of it is the opening of the Secretary for Women, which is a ministry directly related to presidency. It opened under Lula's presidency and President Rousseff, of course, maintained it. She talks about women's rights often, and she had a very strong speech against violence committed on women, which contributed to change the related law.

Sadly, the proportion of seats held by women in the parliament is very low; however it is the same in many countries all over the world, except maybe the Scandinavian countries. The difference of incomes is also an issue, since men are generally paid more for the same job. It is a problem that apparent even in the United States and in European countries, so it is really crucial to change it. Dilma Rousseff is the first female president and she is really fighting to change the regulation. There were many women candidates at the last presidential election and there were three women running for presidency.

Moreover, we have gender quotas in the parliamentary election, at least 30% of the candidates have to be women and this quota was reached the last election for the first time.

Sadly, not all of them were elected and only 9% are finally Brazilian citizens.

Dilma Rousseff also tries to surround herself with women; she has five or six female ministers in her government.

And in the 5,000 cities that Brazil counts, we have a large amount of women as mayors who are responsible for leading these cities. We also have a lot of women in justice, as judges and lawyers.

I also think that her election inspired the young generations and that we have more and more female students in politics, justice and other noteworthy fields; her election allowed youth to believe in itself and to have ambition. On the other hand, women are still really important for "poor people", because women are in charge of money, of taking care of children and so they are playing an important role in the society.

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