

Brazil and Norway Meet to Discuss Social Protection Policies and Cooperation

Source: [MDS](#) and [IPEA](#)

Brasília, February 22, 2013 – The Norwegian Minister of International Development Heikki Holmås visited Brasília on January 23rd and 24th to discuss Brazilian experiences and innovations related to inclusive growth and the reduction of inequality and poverty.

In his passage through the Brazilian capital, Mr. Holmås met with the Executive Secretary of the Brazilian Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (MDS) Marcelo Cardona. They discussed the promotion of gender equality and social development in countries affected by poverty.

Cardona presented advances in the social area of Brazil in the last 10 years, particularly highlighting Brazil's strategy for inclusive growth. He talked about the “**Brazil Without Misery**” plan that aims to overcome extreme poverty. For the Executive Secretary, the greatest challenge facing Brazil is improving the benefits of public policies. According to Cardona, “The Brazil Without Misery plan will initiate an active search on behalf of the Brazilian State to identify the portion of the population that is underserved in terms of services and opportunities.”

The Norwegian Minister congratulated the Government of Brazil for its actions against poverty and suggested that Brazil is one of the leaders in Latin America in terms of cooperation to reduce global inequalities. For Holmås, Brazil's experience demonstrates that political will may facilitate change in difficult circumstances, including with European countries currently undergoing an economic crisis. In conclusion, Holmås stated that “The experience we have learned here is that, out of a crisis, you cannot destroy the living conditions and income for large segments of the population. We need a new pact that involves fair distribution and inclusive growth”.

Roundtable on Inequality, Development and Security

Following the meeting with the Interim Executive Secretary of the MDS, Minister Holmås and his delegation were received by the President of the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Marcelo Neri. In a roundtable discussion, decision makers and policy experts explored Brazilian experiences in the social area and South-South cooperation, including best practices and lessons learned. Holmås noted that “Brazil is acting contrary to rest of the world, prioritizing equality in economic growth for its people.”

The President of the IPEA presented data on the trajectory of equitable policies employed by the federal government of Brazil and stressed that the *Bolsa Família* programme is an important example for the world. According to Neri, women, blacks and marginalized populations experience the highest rates of economic and social improvement, a trend that started in 2006, but that has intensified in recent years.

“Reviews on growth should be viewed with caution. They say that Brazil's economy is not growing, but this is just one perspective. The people are better off than the country, and this is a paradox,” said Marcelo Neri. The President of the IPEA also spoke to the Norwegian Minister about the impacts of the financial crisis in Europe on the quality of Brazilian growth.

During the meeting, Holmås also indicated that his team will soon present a report to the Government of



Norway that places the issue of income inequality as key to social and economic progress. “I have experience in many countries and I can say that the studies which take GDP growth as a priority when analyzing the development pathway of a country are not the most useful for our global reality”, asserted Holmås.

According to the Norwegian Minister, there are many scholars who would like to use Brazil as a model to analyze social distribution. “The key to a more equitable distribution of resources and greater income equality in a country should be inclusion in the labour market and receiving fairer wages, not just minimum wage”, he argued.

Additional participants in the round table discussion included the following representatives: the National Secretary of Citizenship Income of the MDS, Luiz Henrique Paiva; Deputy Director of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC / MRE), Minister João Tabajara; the Research Coordinator of the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), Fábio Veras Soares; Commander of the Staff Director of PM in Rio de Janeiro, Col. Robson Rodrigues da Silva; and Executive Director of Institute Igarapé, Ilona Szabó de Carvalho.

