

4-11-1989

Brazilian President Announces New Plan For Protection Of Amazon

John Neagle

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur>

Recommended Citation

Neagle, John. "Brazilian President Announces New Plan For Protection Of Amazon." (1989). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur/2978>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiSur by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Brazilian President Announces New Plan For Protection Of Amazon

by John Neagle

Category/Department: General

Published: Tuesday, April 11, 1989

On April 6, amid great pomp and circumstance, Brazilian President Jose Sarney announced a plan, called "Our Nature," to protect the Amazon rain forest. Politicians, scientists and ambassadors from neighboring countries attended the ceremony at the presidential palace in Brasilia. According to Sarney, charges of environmental destruction leveled against the Brazilian government are "cruel and unfair...full of scientific falsehoods that misinform the world." Ecologists say destruction of the rain forest exacerbates the "greenhouse effect," a warming trend that is changing the planet's weather. Brazil has refused offers of foreign participation in conservation. "Our Nature" creates new forest reserves and Indian reservations, maintains a ban on timber exports and establishes an Environmental Fund. It includes 17 presidential decrees and seven bills to be sent to Congress. Among the measures are: 1) Ending financial incentives for cattle ranching in the Amazon, seen as the single greatest factor in destruction of the rain forest. World Bank figures say the 1975-86 investment in ranching exceeded \$1 billion. 2) Government control of mercury. Mercury is used by gold miners in the Amazon and has become a major source of water pollution. The government also would rehabilitate areas damaged by mining. 3) Creation of a special forest police force to control fires set by ranchers and farmers to clear jungle land, to be aided by the armed forces and satellite photos. 4) Mapping "agro-ecological zones" to determine which parts of the Amazon can be developed without environmental damage, aided by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Sarney criticized the "alarmist tone of the international campaign" and said satellite photos showed only 5% of the rain forest had been destroyed, compared with estimates of up to 12%. Brazil has set aside 124,000 square miles of land in the past four years for its 220,000 native Indians, he said, and reserving another 160,000 is under study. The president said "Our Nature" would cost Brazil \$350 million in the first two years and the government would welcome help from abroad, "but we will not accept tutelage," he said. "Our doors are open to cooperation from the world, but without conditions," he declared. As he has before, Sarney rejected proposals to trade part of Brazil's \$115 billion foreign debt for investment in conservation projects, which he called "an attempt to convert ecology into business." (Basic data from AP, 04/06/89)

-- End --