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Brazil: Environment Secretary Blasts World Bank Economist For Proposing Third World As Preferred Site For Polluters

by Barbara Khol

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At a Feb. 7 press conference in Brasilia, Environment Secretary Jose Lutzenberger said he had forwarded a protest letter to the World Bank's chief economist Lawrence Summers for defending the idea of moving "dirty" industries to Third World nations. According to Lutzenberger, the economist's "arguments are perfectly logical but completely insane. His ideas are a concrete example of incredible alienation, and of arrogant ignorance." Lutzenberger asserted that "pure economic logic" as articulated in the report by Summers, must not be employed in the analysis of environmental issues and problems. In a press statement, the Greenpeace office in Rio de Janeiro said the report in question was "symptomatic" of contradictory and insensitive attitudes typical of First World governments and experts, and especially in the context of preparations by the United Nations for a global conference on development and environment (scheduled for June in Rio de Janeiro). A statement by the World Bank said "misunderstandings" resulting from the release of an internal memorandum authored by Summers were unfortunate. According to the statement, "Points of view expressed in this internal memorandum by Mr. Summers do not represent the position of the World Bank." (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, 02/07/92)

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