

Hofstra University

## Model United Nations Conference 2024



### **Contemporary Crisis Committee**

Thomas Eldho, Chair  
Nish Arumugam, Crisis Director

Dear Delegates,

I hope you are all well! My name is Thomas Eldho, and I am a sophomore from Long Island studying biology through Hofstra's eight-year direct medical program. This is my sixth year of involvement in Model UN, and I anticipate listening to intense and riveting debate as the chair for the Contemporary Crisis Committee on the future of the Amazon Rain Forest.

In high school, I was the secretary and eventually the president for my Model UN club. Throughout my four years in this club, I attended conferences at Brown, Cornell, and Harvard University. Although I have participated in a variety of committees from SPECPOL to futuristic general assemblies, the UNEP holds a special place in my heart as it was the committee that I received my first "best delegate" award back in 2020. Currently, I am the Vice-President of Model UN at Hofstra, and I am thrilled bring my experience from previous committees to offer a unique perspective as a chair for this committee.

In my free time, I enjoy playing tennis, working out, and watching television. As of now I am in a dry spell for TV shows, but I am always accepting recommendations. From what I have watched so far, *Breaking Bad* takes the crown due to its phenomenal plot and visual effects. On the movie side, I cannot think of a better watch than *Good Will Hunting*. However, I must apologize and come clean that I have not watched any of the *Star Wars* movies in their entirety. If you can still consider me as your chair after that confession, please feel free to reach out to me with show and movie recommendations.

For this crisis committee, I chose this topic as a way for all of us to further educate ourselves on the importance of the land and ecosystem around us. Although we are quite far from the Amazon rainforest, the solutions proposed should seek to harmoniously balance the necessity of preserving wildlife along with maintaining a flourishing Brazilian economy. I implore all delegates to provide nuanced solutions to strike at the core of this long-standing issue.

Although our actions in committee will not directly shape the outcomes of the Amazon Rainforest today, your participation will serve as preparation for a better understanding of the issues and steps that can be taken in the future, perhaps with you leading the way. I look forward to meeting all of you this coming spring!

Sincerely,

Thomas Eldho  
Contemporary Crisis Chair  
HUMUNC 2024

Welcome Delegates!

My name is Nish Arumugam and I have the pleasure of being your Crisis Director for the Contemporary Crisis Chair committee. I am a second year biochemistry major with a minor in sociology. I am originally from Georgia, where I first started competing in Model UN. I have been active in Model UN since seventh grade, competing throughout middle school, high school, and most recently at the collegiate level last year at CHOMUN in Chicago. This will be my first time working behind-the-scenes for a crisis committee and I am really excited to assist you all to get the most out of this conference.

In Brazil, preparations are beginning to ramp up for the coming 2022 presidential elections and voters are eager to find out the candidates' positions. As the race forms, climate change is one topic in particular that is taking center stage. The health of the Amazon rainforest is one aspect of climate change, as it serves as a pillar of the earth's biodiversity and is a unique ecosystem full of endemic species. In addition to housing millions of flora and fauna found nowhere else, it also houses enormous economic potential in the form of timber, rubber, cacao, and gold. Brazilians are anxious to find out the future of their forests along with the future of their economy.

As delegates addressing these issues, how will you find the balance between protecting this jewel of Brazil while also expanding the country's economic prowess? During this committee, find new allies, use your resources, and explore all your options as you work through this critical time.

Sincerely,

Nish Arumugam  
Contemporary Crisis Director  
HUMUNC 2024

### **Introduction to the committee**

Brazil's National Congress is its chief lawmaking body, with a bicameral legislature composed of the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate. Under the duties of Congress, this branch of the government is empowered to pass national fiscal policies, ratify international treaties, override presidential vetoes, approve federal intervention in state matters, and more.<sup>1</sup> The significance of Brazil's Federal Senate dates back to independence in 1824, and it continues to relay the voices of constituents into tangible policies that are capable of shaping the future of the country.<sup>2</sup> In this crisis committee at HUMUNC 2024, we will serve as Brazil's Senate and delve into the topic of the ever-changing climate during a pivotal election year.

The Senate is composed of eighty-one seats, with three Senators from each state that are elected every four years. Under the current political party system, the Brazilian government is divided into four factions: The Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro or PMDB), The Liberal Front Party (Partido da Frente Liberal or PFL), The Social Democratic Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira or PSDB), and the Worker's Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores or PT). The PMDB holds a centrist position within the political climate. Although this political party dominated the Brazilian Senate during the 1980s, various PMDB factions split into new parties, causing a decrease in party population over the subsequent decades.<sup>3</sup> The Liberal Front Party represents a center-right ideology of a free market.<sup>4</sup> The Social Democratic party holds center-leftist ideals of land reform, environmental protection, political reform, and social justice.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the Worker's Party favors working with grassroots movements and largely leans left of center.<sup>6</sup>

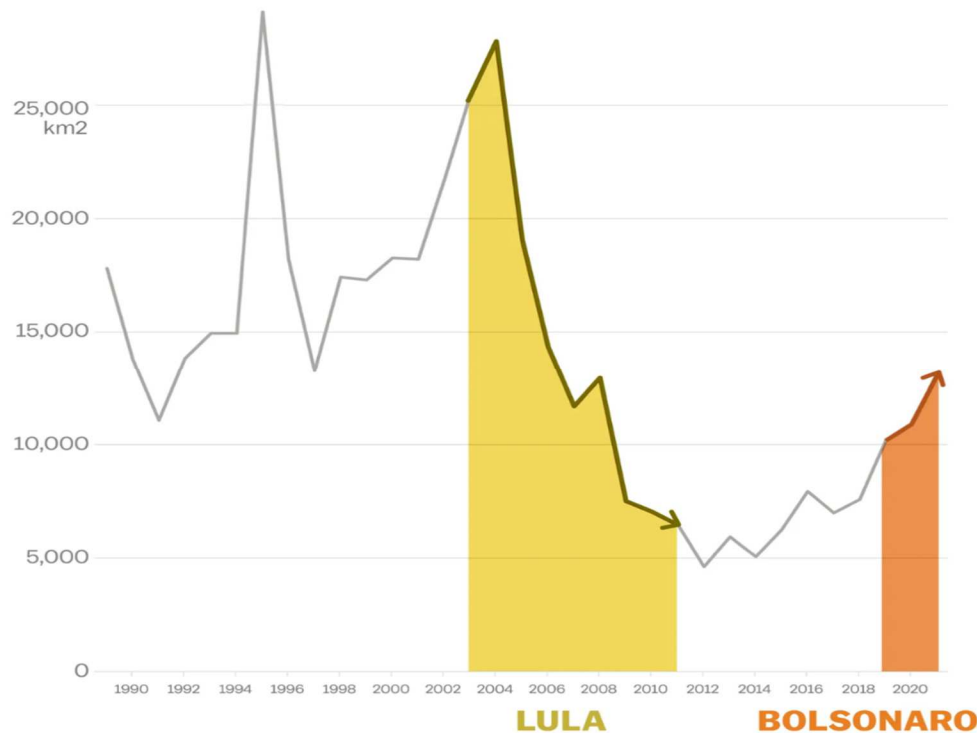
### **Introduction to the topic**

The year is 2022, and the Brazilian people are six weeks away from a pivotal presidential election. On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Brazilian International Institute for Space Research (INPE) detected more than 3,000 fires throughout the Amazon. Alongside the devastating contributions of climate change created by the proliferating fires, major environmental organizations like Greenpeace have blamed the anti-ecofriendly agenda of the current Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, for greater destruction of the rainforest.<sup>7</sup>

Through his current presidency, the policies of the right-wing Bolsonaro have exacerbated the rate of deforestation throughout the Amazon. By the end of 2019, Bolsonaro had “stripped enforcement measures, cut spending for science and environmental agencies, fired environmental experts, and pushed to weaken Indigenous land rights, among other activities largely in support of the agribusiness industry.”<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, Bolsonaro’s opponent, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva values the protection of the Amazon and its resources and has pledged to reduce deforestation rates if he is elected to the office. During the campaign, Lula announced his intent “...to grant new protected status to half a million square km (193,000 sq miles) of the Amazon rainforest, fight deforestation, subsidize sustainable farming and reform Brazil's tax code to usher in a green economy”.<sup>9</sup> Having previously served as President from 2003 to 2011, Lula’s conviction in reducing deforestation within the Amazon is illustrated by Figure 1.

*Figure 1: “Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon accelerated under President Bolsonaro”<sup>10</sup>*



Under Bolsonaro, the INPE estimates more than 34,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the rainforest was lost to deforestation, and area larger in size than Belgium. Brazilian researcher Brenda Brito states that despite an increase in the budget allocated for the enforcement of environmental regulations under this presidency, “The amount actually used is the lowest in 20 years...If you have funds but are not using them, it is another demonstration of lack of capacity or political will to combat environmental crimes.”<sup>11</sup> While the fate of the Amazon partially lies on the results of this upcoming election, delegates must navigate through the political climate and strike at the core of this issue: a lack of fundamental and binding legislation that balances the safety of the Amazon and the economy of Brazil.

On the economic side, the Amazon provides a pivotal part of Brazil's economy. In 2016, economic activity in the rainforest provided 8.6% of the nation's GDP.<sup>12</sup> Brazil's soy plantations contribute to a prime revenue source through exports. Between 2006 and 2017, around 220,000

km<sup>2</sup> of deforestation occurred, and ten percent of this land was used for the development of soybean farms. Although there is a five-year turnaround time from the date of deforestation to the use of the land for soy plantations, land during this time tends to be rented for livestock farming, meaning that land is cleared before it has a clear economic usage.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to soy, produce like cacao, rice, casava, coffee, guarana, black pepper and maize are all significant exports of the area. Logging, specifically of acacia, Amazonian cedar, Brazil nut, laurel, mahogany, myrtle, palm and rosewood is done, both legally and illegally.<sup>14</sup> Rubber is also a major export of the area, with the Amazon being the first area where rubber was harvested. Extensive mining of bauxite, copper, gold, iron, manganese, nickel, and tin,<sup>15</sup> as well as oil extraction projects, also have been conducted in the Amazon.<sup>16</sup>

## **Bloc Positions**

Delegates should use political party affiliations as a guide for the position of their senator's stance on the Amazon, in the absence of any individual statements on the issue. Keep in mind that cooperation and compromise will be needed for the government to function and navigate the crisis successfully.

### The Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB)

The current PMDB encompasses varying members of the political spectrum, but the party ultimately holds a centrist position on the Amazon rainforest. However, as of March of 2022, Senator Juarez Costa of the PMDB justified the passing of a bill that would increase the legal deforestation of the previously protected state, Mato Grosso. It was also revealed that these deforestation lobbyists provided substantial funding in the previous election to these senators supporting the current deforestation bill.<sup>17</sup>

### The Liberal Front Party (PFL)

The PFL is a center-right wing party that was a base for President Bolsonaro's campaign. The PFL's free market belief contributes to its relaxed view on environmental regulations.

### The Social Democratic Party (PSDB)

The PSDB's center-left beliefs overlap with the PMDB and PFL. However, where the PSDB differs is in their belief in environmental regulation and protection. The PSDB has a strong belief in sustainable practice, alongside a free market that allows for this sustainability to be achieved.<sup>18</sup>



### Worker's Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores or PT)

The platform of the PT is center left with a strong focus on grassroots movements and garnering support from the working people. Although the party originally adopted socialist ideologies at its conception, it has largely become more center leaning in the recent decade.<sup>19</sup>

### **Questions to Consider**

1. What is the role of the Federal Government in regulating the environment of Brazil?
2. How can the Senate develop a resolution that honors both the economic success of Brazil and the longevity of its ecosystem?
3. What role can the election of a new president play in the renewal of environmental policies?
4. What can be done to appease the working class of Brazil, that particularly relies upon land cultivation?
5. What is the role of the Federal Government in regulating large corporations that benefit from environmental harvesting?

## Endnotes

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Britannica. "Brazil - Legislature, Politics, Democracy | Britannica." *Www.britannica.com*, [www.britannica.com/place/Brazil/The-legislature#ref312851](https://www.britannica.com/place/Brazil/The-legislature#ref312851). Accessed 20 Sept. 2023.
  - <sup>2</sup> Senado Federal. "The Senate of the Empire." *Portal Institucional Do Senado Federal*, <https://www12.senado.leg.br/institucional/carta-de-servicos/en/history/The-Senate-of-the-Empire>. Accessed 20 Sept. 2023.
  - <sup>3</sup> "Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement | Political Party, Brazil | Britannica." *Www.britannica.com*, [www.britannica.com/topic/Party-of-the-Brazilian-Democratic-Movement](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Party-of-the-Brazilian-Democratic-Movement).
  - <sup>4</sup> ---. "Liberal Front Party | Political Party, Brazil | Britannica." *Www.britannica.com*, [www.britannica.com/topic/Liberal-Front-Party](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Liberal-Front-Party).
  - <sup>5</sup> "Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) | Britannica." *Www.britannica.com*, [www.britannica.com/topic/Brazilian-Social-Democratic-Party](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Brazilian-Social-Democratic-Party).
  - <sup>6</sup> Britannica. "Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva | Biography, Facts, & Involvement with Petrobras Scandal | Britannica." *Www.britannica.com*, 8 Jan. 2024, [www.britannica.com/biography/Luiz-Inacio-Lula-da-Silva#ref791753](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Luiz-Inacio-Lula-da-Silva#ref791753).
  - <sup>7</sup> Greenberg, Chris. "The Amazon — and Our Future — Is Being Burned for Profit." *Greenpeace International*, 5 Sept. 2022, [www.greenpeace.org/international/story/55533/amazon-rainforest-fires-2022-brazil-causes-climate/#:~:text=Just%20six%20weeks%20before%20the](https://www.greenpeace.org/international/story/55533/amazon-rainforest-fires-2022-brazil-causes-climate/#:~:text=Just%20six%20weeks%20before%20the). Accessed 21 Aug. 2023.
  - <sup>8</sup> Jones, Benji. "Earth's Future Depends on the Amazon. This Month, It's up for a Vote." *Vox*, 29 Sept. 2022, [www.vox.com/down-to-earth/2022/9/29/23373427/amazon-rainforest-brazil-jair-bolsonaro-lula-deforestation](https://www.vox.com/down-to-earth/2022/9/29/23373427/amazon-rainforest-brazil-jair-bolsonaro-lula-deforestation).
  - <sup>9</sup> Spring, Jake. "Brazil's Green New Deal: Lula promises environmental policy overhaul". Reuters. October 27, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazils-green-new-deal-lula-promises-environmental-policy-overhaul-2022-10-27/>
  - <sup>10</sup> Jones, Benji. "Earth's Future Depends on the Amazon. This Month, It's up for a Vote." *Vox*, 29 Sept. 2022, [www.vox.com/down-to-earth/2022/9/29/23373427/amazon-rainforest-brazil-jair-bolsonaro-lula-deforestation](https://www.vox.com/down-to-earth/2022/9/29/23373427/amazon-rainforest-brazil-jair-bolsonaro-lula-deforestation).
  - <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>12</sup> Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. "Contribution of the Legal Amazon area to Brazil's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2002 and 2016, by industry sector [Graph]". In *Statista*. December 14, 2018. Retrieved October 27, 2023, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1044320/brazil-legal-amazon-area-share-gdp-sector/>
  - <sup>13</sup> Scherer, Glenn. "Brazil Soy Trade Linked to Widespread Deforestation, Carbon Emissions." *Mongabay Environmental News*, 3 Apr. 2019, <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/04/brazil-soy-trade-linked-to-widespread-deforestation-carbon-emissions/>
  - <sup>14</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Amazon Rainforest". Encyclopedia Britannica, 15 Nov. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Amazon-Rainforest>. Accessed 17 November 2023.
  - <sup>15</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Amazon Rainforest: Agriculture and Forestry". Encyclopedia Britannica, 15 Nov. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Amazon-River/Agriculture-and-forestry>. Accessed 17 November 2023.

- 
- <sup>16</sup> Meredith, Sam. “Brazil touts climate credentials as Amazon deforestation falls — but draws criticism over oil bet.” *MSNBC*. September 29, 2023.  
<https://www.cnbc.com/2023/09/29/amazon-brazil-touts-climate-credentials-but-criticized-over-oil-bet.html>.
- <sup>17</sup> Paes, Caio. “In Brazil’s Mato Grosso State, Deforesters Foot the Bill for Political Campaigns.” *Mongabay Environmental News*, 28 Sept. 2022,  
<https://news.mongabay.com/2022/09/in-brazils-mato-grosso-state-deforesters-foot-the-bill-for-political-campaigns/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2024.
- <sup>18</sup> Fogel, Benjamin. “The Rise and Fall of Brazil’s Social Democrats.” *The Brazilian Report*, 27 July 2020, <http://brazilian.report/power/2020/07/27/psdb-rise-fall-brazil-social-democrats-operation-car-wash/>. Accessed 4 Jan. 2024.
- <sup>19</sup> Hunter, Wendy. “Growth and Transformation of the Workers’ Party in Brazil, 1989–2002”. Kellogg Institute for International Studies. <https://kellogg.nd.edu/documents/1634>”