

Brazil to resume diplomatic relations with Venezuela in January



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Brasilia, December 15 (RHC)-- Brazil is set to restart diplomatic relations with neighbouring Venezuela once President-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva assumes office on January 1st.

On Wednesday, Mauro Vieira -- whom Lula named last week as his pick for foreign minister -- announced that a diplomatic mission will travel to Caracas next month to organise an official Brazilian residence in the city before an ambassador is appointed by Brazil's legislature.

Diplomatic relations between Brazil and Venezuela's left-wing government broke down in 2020, during the tenure of Brazil's current far-right President Jair Bolsonaro. Lula, a left-leaning politician who defeated Bolsonaro in Brazil's October election, has signalled he will seek a thaw in tensions with his country's northern neighbor.

During his time in office, Bolsonaro signed a decree banning Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and senior members of his administration from entering Brazil. He also joined more than 50 countries in recognizing Juan Guaido, a member of Venezuela's opposition, as the country's acting president after Maduro's 2018 re-election.

Countries including the United States called Maduro's 2018 reelection results "fraudulent." But Guaido's self-declared presidency came to little and talks between Maduro's government and the opposition resumed in November.

Vieira on Wednesday reiterated that Brazil will recognize Maduro's government. He also stated his intention to place Brazil's embassy "next to the government that exists, the government that was elected" – meaning Maduro's.

Meanwhile, Guaido's so-called 'ambassador' to Brazil, Maria Teresa Belandria, is reportedly preparing to leave the country. She was recognized as Venezuela's official representative in Brazil under Bolsonaro.

As leftist figures are being voted into power across South America, including Lula in Brazil and Gustavo Petro in Colombia, many have moved to ease relations with Venezuela that were strained under previous right-wing, reactionary governments.

Colombia announced it would restore full diplomatic relations with Venezuela in August, as the countries seek greater collaboration in areas such as trade and security in regions around the border. Petro met with Maduro in early November – the first meeting between their respective heads of state in years. They have also reopened their shared border to trade in an effort to facilitate economic relations.

Brazil's incoming government is reportedly trying to clear Nicolas Maduro for entry so he can attend Lula's inauguration.

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