

Brazil's Lula announces more cabinet picks



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Brasilia, December 23 (RHC)-- Brazil's incoming President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has unveiled more cabinet picks in the run-up to his inauguration on January 1st, including Vice President-elect Geraldo Alckmin as Minister of Development, Industry and Trade.

Da Silva, better known as Lula, announced that economist Esther Dweck would lead the newly-created Management Ministry, while business-friendly Congressman Alexandre Padilha was appointed Institutional Affairs minister.

Lula also named the incoming heads of Brazil's human rights, labour, education, and social development departments, among others. "We know that the challenge ahead is great, but we will work together to rebuild the country," Lula wrote on Twitter before the announcements.

The Brazilian leader, who previously served as the country's president from 2003 to 2010, narrowly defeated far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro in a second-round, presidential run-off in late October. He garnered 50.9 percent support compared with 49.1 percent for the former army captain.

Amid widespread fears that Bolsonaro would contest the results, after he falsely claimed for months that Brazil's electronic voting system was vulnerable to fraud, the outgoing president authorised the

government transition -- though he has not explicitly conceded defeat.

Many of Bolsonaro's supporters continue to reject the election results, with some taking part in protests and roadblocks since the results were announced. Earlier this month, some pro-Bolsonaro demonstrators attempted to invade the federal police headquarters in the capital, Brasilia, on the day that Lula was certified as the country's next president.

Late last month, the head of Brazil's highest electoral authority rejected an attempt by Bolsonaro's allies to challenge the election results. Judge Alexandre de Moraes denounced the effort as being in "total bad faith."

Lula has tried to strike a conciliatory tone after one of the most divisive election campaigns in Brazil's history, promising to govern for all Brazilians. He has pledged to combat the climate crisis and end deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, which surged under Bolsonaro's leadership; defend the rights of Indigenous people; and pull millions of Brazilians out of poverty.

Lula's incoming administration also has said it plans to rebuild relations with neighbouring Venezuela; a diplomatic mission will travel to Caracas in January to organise an official Brazilian residence in the city before an ambassador is appointed by Brazil's legislature.

Earlier in December, Lula announced the first of his incoming cabinet appointments, naming close ally Fernando Haddad, the former mayor of Sao Paulo, as his finance minister. He also chose career diplomat Mauro Vieira as foreign minister, former congressman Jose Mucio as defence minister, Bahia Governor Rui Costa as chief of staff, and the ex-governor of Maranhao state, Flavio Dino, as justice minister.

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