



# INTERVIEW

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**André Corrêa do Lago**

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## **ANDRÉ CORRÊA DO LAGO**

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André Aranha Corrêa do Lago is the President of COP30. He has a degree in Economics from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and joined the Brazilian Foreign Service in 1982. As a career diplomat, he has held functions in different areas at headquarters in Brasília: international organizations, trade promotion, protocol and energy. As adviser at the Office of the President, between 1991 and 1992, he worked in the organization of the Earth Summit (Rio-92). Abroad, he has been posted to the Brazilian embassies in Madrid, Prague, Washington, Buenos Aires and to the Brazilian Mission to the EU in Brussels.

Corrêa do Lago has been working with the sustainable development agenda since 2001. He was the director of the Energy Department (2008-2011) and of the Environment Department (2011-2013) at the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was Brazil's chief negotiator for climate change and for the Rio+20 Conference. He was the Brazilian ambassador to Japan (2013-2018) and to India (2018-2023). From March 2023 to March 2025, he was the Vice-Minister for Climate, Energy and Environment at the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Corrêa do Lago is the author of several books and articles on sustainable development and climate change, as well as on architecture. He is married and has four children. (Adapted from: <https://cop30.br/en/brazilian-presidency>).

The following is the interview given to CEBRI-Journal in October 2025.

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**In your view, is climate a priority for current Brazilian foreign policy? To what extent do Brazil's international actions on the climate agenda align with domestic policies, such as the Ecological Transformation Plan? In your view, has Brazil been able to forge political coalitions amid growing geopolitical rivalries and the weakening of multilateralism?**

**ANDRÉ CORRÊA DO LAGO:** Yes, climate change is certainly a priority of this Brazilian administration. In fact, it is the continuation of a long tradition in Brazilian diplomacy, because as soon as the theme began to be addressed multilaterally, during the preparation of the Stockholm conference of 1972, Brazil was significantly present in those negotiations, allowing the country to be a strong voice in this debate from the very beginning. Then the theme evolved from environment to sustainable development, and then to climate change, expanding into many other discussions, from trade to geopolitics. And I believe that Brazilian diplomacy has been very conscious that the theme is central for a country that, at the same time, has the largest tropical forest in the world, the cleanest electricity mix among large countries, and the potential to integrate climate into its economy.

This dimension of integrating climate into the economy is central under this government. The Ministry of Finance, in the first year of this third

term of President Lula, has launched the Ecological Transition Plan—a plan that is extremely important because it shows that the theme is not being dealt with in a silo, only by the Ministry of Environment. On the contrary, it has become a cross-cutting issue throughout the Brazilian government, which, I believe, is proof of how mature the perception of the subject is. The economic consequences of climate change and the extent to which they are highly disruptive to many activities are increasingly well known. At the same time, the fight against climate change offers extraordinary opportunities for economic growth, job creation, and technological development. So it is one of

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the central themes of the new economy, and I believe it is very positive that the Ministry of Finance has been so active in Brazil in supporting this agenda, since no Ministry can do it better than each country's Ministry of Finance.

As a mid-sized power, Brazil always favors multilateralism because it helps create a fairer world. So we very much continue to believe in multilateralism—to create rules and set directions that countries can build together. Naturally, there is also a bilateral dimension in those discussions, as well as plurilateral dimensions. So the climate issue has become increasingly present in the G20 debates, in the discussions of the BRICS, and in organizations such as the treaty of the Amazon countries. These are three contexts in which this third term of President Lula has been particularly active. The first was the 2023 Amazon Summit, held in Belém, with the presidents of the eight countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO). In 2024, we presided over the G20 and, in 2025, we hosted the BRICS. The Brazilian position in these three moments has been unequivocal in associating development with the fight against climate change. COP30 arrives at a moment when the theme has already been widely discussed within the government by different ministries, all of which are positively aware of how important the issue of climate change has become for the country's development.

### **How do you assess the impact of Donald Trump's second presidency on global climate governance, especially concerning the effectiveness and legitimacy of decisions taken in multilateral forums such as COP30 and climate finance?**

**ACL:** There is much debate about the new challenges to multilateralism today, as well as a new American administration that has changed the country's position in many international organizations. In the case of climate politics, the Trump government's position has not only led to the US exiting the Paris Agreement, but also to changes in internal policies that supported new and renewable energies, with an international impact that is difficult to measure at the moment because the consequences are not totally clear. Internally in the United States, renewable energy has become, as in all other countries, some of the cheapest and quickest to install—even if government policies are not favoring renewables, they continue to expand. In Texas, for instance, there is a significant expansion of renewables.

The future of this scenario on the international stage is yet to unfold. The US government is seeking to reverse the trend of increasing climate issues' incorporation into institutions such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), as well as other important international

organizations responsible for sectors with relevant emissions. We have to observe how this evolves before the end of the year. On the other hand, through Energy Secretary Chris Wright, the Trump administration also acknowledges the consequences of climate change and the fact that adaptation is necessary.

The issue of financing has been a central theme throughout these negotiations. However, we have to take into account that investment decisions by American companies do not necessarily align with the priorities of one American government or another, because most investments in the fight against climate change are in the energy sector, which is a typical mid- to long-term investment. So many of a company's decisions are not so much related to immediate political circumstances. As I have already mentioned, the fight against climate change can be an essential instrument for development, growth, profits, and job creation. We will see an interesting evolution in the months to come. A recent report from the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) shows a clear perception of renewable energy as the cheapest and easiest to install energy today, and that this trend is growing. Every year, investments in renewable energy grow. More than that, there is a technological step we have to watch very closely: the development of batteries. If we progress on energy storage, we will see exponential growth in renewable energy worldwide.

**In a scenario of delays in submitting Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), how do you envision the implementation of the “globally determined contribution” proposed in your fourth letter? And how can we overcome the obstacles to announcing and implementing these contributions?**

**ACL:** The delays in the delivery of the NDCs, while being a challenge, also present an opportunity for further improvement. Before COP30, there was an expectation, until last year, that most countries would submit their NDCs by February 25<sup>th</sup>, as determined in the Paris Agreement—but this did not happen. A small number of countries have respected the February deadline. We are now waiting for additional countries to present their NDCs, and many will do so before COP30.

Nevertheless, there is another dimension: the quality of the NDCs, which is excellent news, as they are being prepared with a much greater depth. Most countries are working with all the sectors of the economy and deeply involving the Ministries of Finance. We are going to have a series of NDCs that are genuinely committed to an economy-wide effort across most countries. However, this challenge has also led many countries to be unable to complete their NDCs on time. Therefore, there is a positive side and a downside: NDCs are now much better

prepared, but countries have realized they need more time to present them.

The fact is that NDCs have to be seen not as a negative exercise in how we are going to reduce emissions, but as a positive exercise on how we are going to use these new circumstances to ensure economic growth. That is why Brazil developed its NDCs as part of its economic development plan, which is very realistic because so many positive examples are already known. There will likely be a completely different perception of what it means to integrate climate change into the economy.

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**What, in your assessment, are the main external and domestic challenges that Brazil needs to address in its current climate agenda? In this sense, what are the most significant contradictions or ambiguities in implementing this agenda, considering external**

**expectations and domestic constraints?**

**ACL:** The term ambiguity is interesting to define the Brazilian challenge. But the word can be applied to all the world's economies because fighting climate change is an economy-wide challenge. So we have to think of countries that have to change most of their energy sources to reduce emissions, or change their industrial profile, or change their agriculture and urban planning. That is why we all agree that each country must have its own transition plan, and why we use transition in the plural, “transitions”, because each country will have a different answer.

A large country like Brazil demands diverse solutions. Issues in Acre, Mato Grosso do Sul, and Paraná demand entirely different answers. Thus, we need to incorporate the idea that there is no “one size fits all” response and must be very creative, innovative, and open to the solutions that are necessary. In Brazil, as a country with many options, choosing among them requires a significant internal debate. Brazil is both a champion of renewables and a growing oil exporter; it is a country that is 87% urban and has the largest tropical forest in the world. It is a developing country, but already has extremely important companies and exceptional academic and scientific institutions. So there are choices—directions that Brazil has to choose—and when a country has many options, the internal debate is even more difficult.

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Climate change has severely affected most regions of Brazil in recent years, and I can feel a strong recognition of the importance of tackling the issue. At the same time, there is concern that this will pose a threat to some sectors and traditional activities, and that is why an integrated incorporation of climate into the economy will contribute enormously to overcome this threat.

There is a growing consciousness in Brazil that the country can be a leader in changing perceptions of sectors of the economy, sometimes seen as “problem sectors”, when in fact they are “solution sectors”. If you take forestry, for instance, you immediately think of deforestation and related emissions, but we have to look at forestry as a solution, because the restoration of degraded

lands can produce an extraordinary impact on the capture of CO<sub>2</sub> already in the atmosphere. As is the case with agriculture: we have to integrate knowledge of CO<sub>2</sub> capture and assess how it fits with the most modern solutions to fight climate change. Mining is also a sector that will provide some of the most important tools for developing new technologies to fight climate change, and we all know how essential new minerals will be in the new economy.

In that context, the Ministry of Finance’s engagement in the international debate on climate, and the recent launch of the Ministers of Finance’s contribution to the preparation of COP30, are significant landmarks that will impact positively in Belém.

**What should we expect after COP30? What, in your assessment, are the political ambitions and agenda to pursue? How should we achieve this?**

**ACL:** The expectation regarding COP30 has to be proportional to the extent of the theme’s incorporation across the most diverse human activities. An essential deliverable is to successfully convince all publics that there is progress across most dimensions of the fight against climate change, whether technological, economic, or through the extraordinary examples we are seeing in communities all over the

world. COP30 will be successful if we can demonstrate to the general public that these negotiations have produced rules and guidelines ready for adoption, and that we can directly implement most of the measures we have decided to pursue. That is why we are calling it the COP of implementation, the COP of action, because people need to understand that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, which are rules negotiated by consensus, carry a very special weight. COP30 must convey to the general public the perception that this is not a

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negative agenda; rather, it is the agenda of the future. This sense of progress we are making across most climate change agendas is one of the great achievements of Paris. The structuring of the COP with a high-level segment featuring leaders, in which President Lula will propose some directions, followed by the negotiation itself, in which we will continue to create rules, will be complemented by the Action Agenda. We will be able to engage actors who do not negotiate agreements yet are essential for putting them into practice, like the private sector, the subnational governments, and civil society. We are building on what was achieved in previous COPs and structuring it so that the results of the Action Agenda are more precise and easier to monitor. We will show the results of the commitment of those who participate in the Action Agenda. Considering how many actors we need to convince about climate issues, the involvement of different sectors and actors is fundamental.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) established that we have only a few years to make the major changes necessary to avoid reaching 1.5 °C relative to the beginning of the Industrial Age; we have to incorporate urgency into all our actions. However, for those that are resistant to the scientific argument, or for those that are resistant to the responsibility of the international community regarding the fight against climate change, there

is the economic argument. This is bringing many to this debate with new ideas and positive solutions, winning minds in many sectors—energy is the most obvious—but there are many other sectors where the concern with mitigation and with adaptation have created new allies.

The economic dimension illustrates the positive impact of new technologies and practices, aligned with economic theory. Beyond the involvement of the Economy Ministers, we have also invited and received an enthusiastic response from some of the world's top economists, now dedicated to incorporating climate change into economic theory. A group of economists is leading this contribution at COP30. Professor José Alexandre Scheinkman, from Columbia University, has created a council of economists for the COP30 Presidency, and has presented a series of proposals to strengthen global climate finance mechanisms. He told me that all the economists he

approached to propose new directions for the fight against climate change responded positively and contributed to his efforts. This academic dimension will have a considerable influence in the years ahead.

It is exciting to see sectors such as insurance become increasingly important new voices in the debate over climate change. We also have to see how the International Court of Justice's decision on climate change negotiations introduces a new dimension that may accelerate the involvement of companies, cities, and other actors who will be key to accelerating this debate.

The fact that the issue of climate change has become so widely debated is already one of the great results of this process, which began in the early 1970s, thanks to scientists, scholars, and communities who have proven that we can adopt a rational approach to climate change. It indicates how successful these negotiations have been in demonstrating that this has to be a central issue in international relations. ■

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