

# Brazil's window on the world

## INTERVIEW WITH ALESSANDRO TEIXEIRA

PRESIDENT OF APEX-BRASIL



**ALESSANDRO TEIXEIRA** holds an MA in Economics from the University of São Paulo and a PhD in Technological and Industrial Competitiveness from the University of Sussex in England. Mr Teixeira is currently the president of Apex-Brasil, the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency, and since April 2008 has also been the president of WAIPA, the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies, whose membership covers 156 countries. In August 2008, he received the title of "Person of the Year, 2008 – Latin America" from the *Financial Times*.

### How would you characterise the role and remit of Apex?

Well, the agency has gone through a number of changes in recent years but when I took over as head of Apex, President Lula gave me the task of telling the story of Brazil – how we have gone from being a country that was simply surviving from one crisis to the next to a country that is one of the leading economies not just in the region but in the world – and it's a story that is still unfolding, and getting better all the time.

Ten or fifteen years ago Brazil's middle class made up around 40 per cent of country's population. That figure is now over 53 per cent. We have stabilised our economy, made it much more professional and efficient, and that is why you are seeing more Brazilian companies going global. And as more of our companies succeed internationally they inspire other smaller and medium sized companies in Brazil to emulate them, giving a positive feedback to the Brazilian economy as a whole.

So, I would say our principal task is to present the best of Brazil to the world and to help the small, medium-sized and even larger companies in Brazil to seize the opportunities open to them in the international marketplace. To this end, we have increased the number of events in which we participate internationally from around 500 a year to nearly 750.

In the past, Apex was solely responsible for export promotion, but when I came on board we added investment promotion to our portfolio as well, so now we do a lot of work with investors and businessmen to shape and improve the business climate in Brazil and to showcase it to the world. Besides this, we also take care of all Brazil's bilateral relations involving the private sector, such as the JETCO (Joint Economic Trade Committee) programme with the UK.

### How significant is the organisation's international footprint and where are you focusing your efforts?

As I mentioned, we have been making a few changes since I arrived and whereas previously we had three offices in Europe – one in Poland, one in Germany and one in Portugal – we currently have only the one in Poland. We also have offices in China, Russia, Dubai and Miami, and we are in the process of opening one in Africa.

In terms of Europe, our plan is to open in Brussels before the end of this year and hopefully to establish a base in London in the near future. BNDES recently

opened an office in the UK, so it would make sense for us to go where they are.

### It's not hard to see the appeal of Brazil for British businesses, but what makes the UK a priority for Brazilian firms?

On a per capita basis, the UK is probably the most valuable country in the world in terms of science and innovation. For example, the British have been discussing biotechnology since the 1970s – long before the US got into it – and you have the oldest petrochemical and chemicals industry in the world.

### Yet ICI and BOC are no longer British-owned and the US has long since taken the lead in biotech...

The ownership is not really important because you still have the knowledge. And besides, you have two of the world's largest and most successful oil and gas companies, BP and BG Group, without having significant hydrocarbon reserves.

The fact is that Britain has been trading with the world for over 400 years and is a gateway for Brazil into Europe and many other parts of the world, so it is a hugely important partner for us. Added to which, the UK has a strong scientific base which it has been able to commercialise very successfully, while we have a large and rapidly developing economy and the greatest biodiversity in the world, so there are huge complementarities between us.

### What common interests and approaches do you see in terms of trade and investment policies between the two countries' governments?

I think despite the fact that you are a small country and we are a large one, we share a common approach to the Doha Development Round, in that we both believe that it is better to have a world agreement than a proliferation of bilateral agreements. Secondly, we're both fighting for a low-carbon economic model because we know that we cannot compete with low cost economies that don't care about anything besides price. So, we are both striving for economic sustainability.

Thirdly, we share a number of beliefs in social policies such as healthcare and education, which we believe should be universal, and a commitment to better regulation – whether it be in terms of pharmaceutical sector, the environment or the economy. So, I think there is much we can learn from each other. **F**