

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Meeting Between President Barack Obama and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil

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March 12, 2009

Q1: What is the outlook for President Obama's meeting with President Lula?

A1: President Barack Obama will meet with President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, March 14. President Lula will be the first South American leader to meet with President Obama since his inauguration. The daytime meeting at the White House will reinforce the strong bilateral relationship between the United States and Brazil, which, with nearly 200 million people, is South America's most populous country. In 2008, Brazil was among the top 10 U.S. trading partners and had the largest volume of trade of any South American nation with the United States. There are an estimated 210,000 Brazilians living in the United States.

Q2: What issues will be on the agenda?

A2: President Obama and President Lula are expected to discuss cooperative approaches to global and hemispheric challenges. Climate change, renewable energy, trade, and the upcoming G-20 meetings in early April in London are likely to be on the meeting agenda. The political situation in Haiti, where Brazil commands the UN Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH), may also be a topic of discussion. The two presidents may choose to review joint assistance efforts involving technical experts from both countries, such as cooperation to help countries in Central America and the Caribbean develop domestic biofuels industries or working together to address malaria and other global health challenges in Lusophone Africa. They may also review progress on the U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality, signed one year ago on March 13, 2008. With the Summit of the Americas scheduled to take place in Trinidad and Tobago on April 17–19, 2009, the meeting on March 14 offers an opportunity for the two leaders to discuss economic and security issues of regional concern.

Q3: What results can be expected from the visit?

A3: The meeting on March 14 will be the first time President Obama and President Lula will have met in person. It will enable the two leaders to get to know each other and to discuss topics of mutual interest. Rather than result in any major deliverables, it is likely the meeting will instead serve to forge an agenda for cooperation on issues of global and regional concern. It is expected that President Lula may invite President Obama to visit Brazil later this year to continue to identify opportunities to strengthen the bilateral relationship.

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