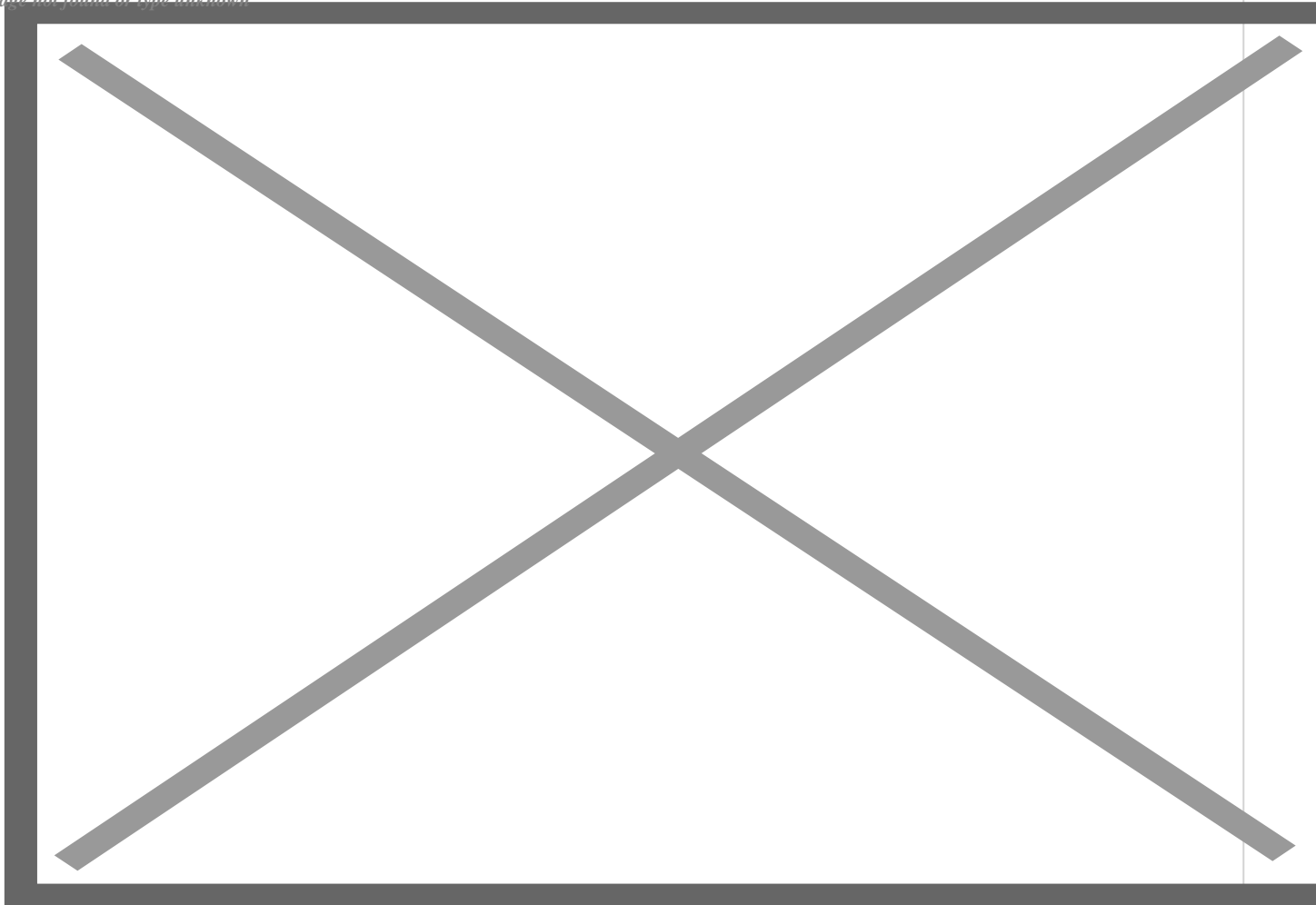


# *UK to contribute to Brazil's Amazon defense fund*

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**Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva gives a thumbs up as he meets British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in London, UK**

**British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the Amazon Fund contribution during a meeting with Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva at 10 Downing Street in London on May 5, 2023 [Kin Cheung/Pool via Reuters]**

London, May 6 (RHC)-- British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said the United Kingdom will contribute more than \$101 million (80 million pounds) to Brazil's Amazon Fund, an initiative that seeks to stop deforestation in the sprawling South American rainforest.

Sunak made the pledge on Friday after holding talks in London with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, whom the British prime minister said "has exhibited great leadership on climate change." "There are so many interests we have in common," Sunak told Lula at the meeting at 10 Downing Street, mentioning higher trade and the fight to combat the climate crisis.

"I'm delighted to announce we will be investing in your Amazon Fund and I pay tribute to your leadership in this initiative," he said. The Brazilian president, who is in the UK to attend King Charles III's coronation at the weekend, also welcomed the talks. "We had a good conversation about our trade relations, environmental protection and world peace," Lula wrote on Twitter.

The left-wing leader, who narrowly defeated former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro in an October run-off election, has pledged to fight for "zero deforestation" in the Amazon, roughly two-thirds of which lies in Brazil. Deforestation surged under Bolsonaro, who promoted greater economic development in the Amazon and loosened environmental safeguards.

In 2019, Bolsonaro dissolved the steering committee that selected sustainable projects to finance through the Amazon Fund, prompting Germany and Norway to freeze their donations.

The rainforest is critical to the global fight against climate change, and rights groups had denounced the Bolsonaro administration's policies as leading to an uptick in destruction, as well as rising threats against Indigenous communities in the region. But in late January, just weeks after Lula took office, Germany announced that it would make \$38 million available again to the Amazon Fund.

The German government also pledged \$87 million in low-interest loans for farmers to restore degraded areas, as well as \$34 million for Brazilian states in the Amazon region to protect the rainforest.

"With the new government and the team of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and [Environment] Minister Marina Silva, we have a great chance to protect the forest and to offer a new perspective to the people who live there," German Development Minister Svenja Schulze said at the time.

Last month, U.S. President Joe Biden -- who met Lula at the White House in February-- announced that he would make a request to Congress to contribute \$500 million over five years to the fund and related activities. France and Spain also have shown interest in contributing, Brazil has said.

On Friday, Lula thanked Sunak and said it was time to "normalise" relations between the United Kingdom and Brazil, adding that "much more can be done in terms of trade." The Brazilian president also reiterated that countries with large forests need support — especially from developed nations — to protect them, while reaffirming Brazil's commitment to zero deforestation by 2030.

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