

Good evening everyone, and welcome to this 20th edition of the gala dinner. Let me begin by thanking Sergio Gullo for his kind words and by recognizing the invaluable contribution of the Brazilian Chamber to bring our business communities closer together. Tonight, we celebrate, once again, the economic ties that bind Brazil and the UK.

It is a pleasure to pay tribute to business leaders who have made a difference to further connect our economies.

I fully endorse the words of Sergio Gullo about tonight's honorees, Luiz Seabra, Guilherme Leal and Pedro Passos, chairmen of Natura. The decision of Natura to join forces with The Body Shop is an example of the vast potential for new partnerships between Brazilian and British companies.

As we celebrate Natura's presence in the UK, we are encouraged to work harder to intensify our business relations on both sides of the Atlantic. Our countries are among the nine largest economies in the world. Yet, our trade and investment flows do not fully reflect this reality. It is a shared objective of both Brazil and the UK to deepen our economic cooperation even further, as it is a shared objective to lay the basis for more sustained economic growth.

In the case of Brazil, an ambitious agenda of reforms was put in place by President Michel Temer. Confidence in our economy has been restored. This is certainly something Minister Guardia will have much to talk to you about. We thank him very much for his presence tonight and look forward to his presentation.

Last month, ladies and gentlemen, more than a hundred million Brazilians went to the polls to elect new governments and new members of Parliament at the federal and the state levels. It was an extraordinary display of the vitality of democracy in Brazil.

Brazilians have examined different proposals for the country and made their decision in a free and fair electoral process. Now, a new government is being formed. President elect Jair Bolsonaro has been an advocate of fiscal balance and structural reforms to boost growth and job creation.

In the UK, we are closely following the Brexit process. As we all deliver on the democratic wishes of our peoples, new domains for economic integration will emerge. We should make the best use of the new opportunities that arise.

Before concluding, may I refer to a very special moment in the relations between Brazil and the UK.

Fifty years ago, Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh arrived in Brazil for the first visit of a British monarch to South America. In the six cities they visited, crowds lined the streets to greet the royal couple.

The visit was a milestone in the friendship between Brazil and the UK. The Queen attended the inauguration of the now prestigious Museum of Art of São Paulo. In Rio de Janeiro, her Majesty watched a football match at Maracanã stadium and presented the trophy to Brazilian football legend Pelé.

On this very 8th of November of the year 1968, the Queen was in the city of Campinas. She visited the outstanding Agronomic Institute, a research center established in 1887 by Pedro the Second, Emperor of Brazil. Research conducted since then by the Institute has contributed to making Brazil the agricultural powerhouse it is today.

So, this is an evening of celebration. We celebrate the strength of our economic partnership, and the potential to increase it even further. We celebrate our common history and, I'm confident, the common future that lies ahead of us.

Allow me to propose a toast to the friendship between Brazil and the UK - and, of course, to the Queen.

Ambassador Fred Arruda