

Words by His Excellency the president of the Alexandre de Gusmão Foundation (FUNAG), ambassador Sérgio Eduardo Moreira Lima, on the occasion of signing the Memorandum of Understanding between FUNAG and Wilton Park, with the Permanent Undersecretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and Head of the Diplomatic Service of the United Kingdom, Sir Simon McDonald, at the Rio Branco Institute (IRBr).

First of all, let me greet my colleagues at the table, the Director of the Rio Branco Institute, Ambassador José Estanislau do Amaral Souza, the Permanent Undersecretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Head of the Diplomatic Service, Sir Simon McDonald, and the British Ambassador Vijay Rangarajan.

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

I should start by congratulating Ambassador Simon McDonald for an outstanding lecture. I would also like to thank Ambassador Estanislau for the invitation. It is with great satisfaction that I will take this opportunity to sign the Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation between Wilton Park and FUNAG, with the Permanent Undersecretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and Head of the Diplomatic Service of the United Kingdom.

This is a necessary step to continue a fruitful collaboration between our two institutions, as well as to strengthen our partnership to promote friendship, mutual knowledge and understanding. Originally, the memorandum was signed in 2014 for a period of three years during the visit of the then British Foreign Minister, William Hague. It had therefore to be renewed. In fact, cooperation between our institutions is already part of our bilateral tradition and of the dialogue in foreign policy and international relations between Brazil and the UK.

Under its umbrella we were able to convene important international events such as the one organized by both institutions in 2016 on Improving the impact of development projects in Sub-Saharan Africa through increased UK/Brazil cooperation and partnerships, held in Brasília, at Itamaraty Palace.

Wilton Park is one of the most influential think tanks in the United Kingdom and well recognized as a promoter of new thinking and the development of new ideas on foreign policy and international relations in support of the work of the FCO.

In its turn, FUNAG has an analogous role within the Brazilian government. It is the leading institution in terms of the number of books published in the field of foreign policy, international relations and Brazilian diplomatic history. It has published nearly a thousand titles in Portuguese, English, Spanish, Chinese and German. We collaborate with institutions all over the world. Our Digital Library, with over 600 titles is accessed by over 2 million people from 186 countries. It is from the UK that we receive the second largest number of foreign visits to our website (almost 330 thousand visits in

2017). FUNAG has been included in recent years by the University of Pennsylvania as one of the best think tanks linked to government in the world.

On a personal note, allow me to express my warm welcome here on this occasion to an old colleague and friend, who is visiting Brazil and now speaks for the Diplomatic Service of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Simon McDonald. We both served as Ambassadors to Israel in a challenging time from 2003 to 2006.

Welcome my friend. Thank you.