

LERC's Latin American Liaison Officer Roberto Khatlab at International Conference in Brazil

14th-16th October 2009, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Reported by Elie Nabhan



Itamaraty Palace, venue of the Conference hosted by the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations (Oct 2009).

The 2nd Conference of Brazilians Living Abroad organized by the Ministry of External Relations of Brazil created a forum for politicians and academics from countries where Brazilians live and brought together representatives from the United States, Japan, Australia, Europe and Africa.

Mr. Roberto Khatlab, the Latin American Liaison Officer of the Lebanese Emigration Research Centre at Notre Dame University-Louaizé, who has been living in Lebanon for over two decades, represented Lebanon in company of the General Consul of Brazil in Lebanon Honorable Mr. Michael Geep. They were the only two participants from the Middle East.



Consul General of Brazil in Lebanon Honorable Michael Geep poses before the steps of Itamaraty Palace venue of the Conference (Oct 2009).

Mr. Khatlab participated in four roundtable discussions at the meeting in Rio de Janeiro on Education and Culture, Welfare and Labor, Consular Affairs, and Political Affairs.

In his discourse, Mr. Khatlab pointed out that Brazilians living in Lebanon, who number up to 10,000 persons, wanted to have a greater contact with the culture, language and literature of their country of origin. This desire was also manifested by Brazilian communities in other countries such as the United States.

He pointed out that “many sons of Brazilians who are born and living in Lebanon do not speak Portuguese” due to the very few places available to learn the language. He called for schools and cultural centers that would serve the Brazilian community in Lebanon, stressing more contact with Brazilian literature and publications. For his part, Mr. Khatlab said that he would soon teach literature as part of a course entitled Portuguese Language and Literature being offered this year by the Holy Spirit University in Kaslik, Lebanon.

Other problems facing Brazilians in Lebanon are family related, he added. Brazilian women, who married Lebanese men in Brazil and moved with them to Lebanon, have to abide by the family religious courts according to the person’s religious affiliation in cases of divorce and of matters relating to custody of their children, which puts Brazilian women at a disadvantage. Mr. Khatlab called for Brazilian women to be better informed about the system in Lebanon prior to their move to the country.

Mr. Khatlab mentioned that there is a new phenomenon of migration of Brazilians of Lebanese descent to other countries for work or education and gave the example of Mr. Alberto Esper, who has recently migrated to Angola in Africa.



Brazilian national resident in Australia Mrs. Lucia Tavares-Johns at the Conference with Mr. Roberto Khatlab (Oct 2009).



At the conference: (From left to right) Brazilian nationals residing in Japan, Mr. Carlos Shinoda and Mr. Francisco Fretias sitting with Mr. Roberto Khatlab. (Oct 2009).

The conference in Rio recognized the importance of establishing and strengthening contact with Brazilian emigrants and their communities abroad where approximately three million of them live and remit to Brazil around US\$7 billion Dollars annually. The request for a greater contact between Brazilian diaspora and their culture was included in the final statement of the conference.