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Yesterday, the people of Brazil had a historic vote in favor of returning President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) to power. Lula, who served as President of Brazil from 2003 to 2010 (and is the first President in Brazil to return for a third term), is known for his support of governmental policies that favor the environment and disenfranchised social groups. Deforestation in the Amazon dropped significantly (by over 70%) during Lula's last two terms, while it has surged (by over 70%) under President Bolsonaro. Scientists have warned that this surge threatens a "tipping point" for the Amazon, which would have devastating impacts not only for Brazil, but for the world.

In this election, Lula ran on a platform vowing to curb illegal deforestation and mining in the Amazon and support Indigenous and local level community interests and involvement in forest management. As he said in his victory speech yesterday, "Brazil is ready to resume its leading role in the fight against the climate crisis." And as we know, if the Amazon goes, the global community loses the fight again climate change.

Lula's victory gives rise to a great deal of hope for a return to policies and programs that protect the Amazon and respect and advance the rights of Indigenous Peoples. At the same time, Bolsonaro's Liberal Party saw gains in the senate and lower house, which demonstrates the challenging political dynamics in this country of more than 200 million people. Ensuring close engagement and collaborative efforts between the new national government and subnational governments will be key to successful environmental and sustainable economic development in the years to come.

To that end, and of potential interest to Legal-Planet readers, the Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force (GCF Task Force) – a project of the Emmett Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at UCLA School of Law and UCLA's Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, in partnership with the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder – will continue to advance partnerships between the nine Brazilian state governments who are members of our unique subnational collaboration of 39 states and provinces working to protect tropical forests, reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and promote realistic pathways to forest-maintaining rural development. The GCF Task Force is eager to work with the incoming Lula administration in Brazil as well as with

all levels – and parties – of Brazil's government to promote the people, forest, and climate agenda that the Amazon, and the world, so desperately needs.

The GCF Task Force will continue to strengthen our partnership with the Consortium of Amazonian Governors and congratulates GCF Task Force reelected and incoming Governors, whose leadership will determine the future of the Amazon. Under the Manaus Action Plan for a New Forest Economy, adopted at the GCF Task Force Annual Meeting in Manaus in March 2022, the GCF Task Force looks forward to working with these Governors, with their civil servants, with Secretaries of the Environment and other key state-level leaders in economics, planning, and social departments. We also look forward to continuing our partnerships with the government of Norway, which with the election of Lula is exploring the return of the Amazon Fund (halted since 2019), and to strengthening partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and local community leaders, with NGOs, with government agencies, and private sector partners. Under the GCF Task Force theory of change, only by working together can we promote viable mechanisms for reducing poverty and deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon and forge a pathway forward that protects forests and benefits people.