Report on Senator Marina Silva’s opening remarks
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The *Environmental Policy, Social Movements, and Science for the Brazilian Amazon* conference held at the University of Chicago on November 5-6, 2009 opened with a videotaped message from Brazilian Senator Marina Silva. Former Minister of the Environment Marina Silva has played an important role in the development of environmental and social policy in the Amazonian region since 1984, when she founded the CUT (*Central Única dos Trabalhadores*) labor union with Chico Mendes. Having shifted her political allegiances from the PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – Worker’s Party) to the PV (*Partido Verde* – Green Party) in August 2009, she is expected to run for president as candidate for the PV in the 2010 Brazilian presidential elections. In recognition of her achievements in defense of the environment Marina Silva has been awarded numerous awards, including the United Nations’ Champions of the Earth award in 2007, the World Wildlife Fund’s Duke of Edinburgh medal in 2008, and the Norwegian Sophie Prize in 2009.

Senator Silva opened her videotaped message by emphasizing the importance of the topics to be discussed at the conference at Chicago for the Amazonian region in Brazil. From her perspective, the greatest challenge for the Brazilian Amazon lies in creating a model for sustainable development that takes the environment as well as the people living in the region into account. Here, she argued, it is important to come up with a way to bring hard science in dialogue with the traditional knowledge of local communities. While traditional knowledge might not be based on modern scientific principles, its foundation in long-term experience with the local environment provides a crucial resource for constructing models for sustainable development.

In this respect, Marina Silva found the conference’s attempt to bring representatives of traditional Amazonian communities, science and NGOS together to evaluate the developments of the past 20 years in the Amazonian region highly commendable. For her, one of the greatest achievements over this time period has been the transformation and expansion of individual pilot projects of sustainable development into general public policy. A prime example of such transformations has been the implementation of the *plano de combate ao desmatamento* (combat...
against deforestation plan) by the Brazilian federal government, which has significantly reduced deforestation and the release of CO2 throughout the Amazonian region.

In conclusion, Marina Silva highlighted that while the advances that have been made towards more sustainable forms of development in the Amazon over the past 20 years are significant, they should, nonetheless, be understood as but a beginning. The challenge that still remains is how to transform existing models of development to allow for the creation of increasingly sustainable forms of production, and how to create policies for the Amazon that take into account all the different aspects of sustainability: economic, social, environmental, cultural, and especially ethical. According to the senator, we already have most of the technical knowledge and skills we need to take care of the global environment. What we do need, however, is to put our technical knowledge into the service of an ethically sound project of development that also protects the environment.