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Brazil's hypocrisy at COP30

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The Brazilian government's 20 October authorization of oil drilling in the mouth of the Amazon River stands in stark contrast to Brazil's role as host this week of the 30th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30) (*1*). This decision undermines the credibility of Brazil's climate commitments and the message the country seeks to convey on a global stage.

The project allows the government-run company Petrobras to conduct exploratory oil drilling in an offshore area near the mouth of the Amazon River. This runs counter to the International Energy Agency's position (Net Zero by 2050) that no new oil and gas fields should be developed anywhere in the world (*2*). The project is estimated to take roughly 5 years before commercial production of oil could begin, followed by another 5 years to recover the initial investment. After that, investors would be unlikely to halt operations at zero profit, meaning that extraction would continue.

The depth of water at the drilling site is twice that of the site of the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill, which took 5 months to contain. A spill at the Amazon site might not be contained for many months, which could lead to an unprecedented disaster for biodiversity (*3*). The area is ecologically diverse (*4*, *5*), including coral reefs and coastal mangroves (*6*, *7*). The livelihoods of Indigenous peoples and traditional fishing communities would be threatened by such a disaster (*3*).

Brazil's dual stance—proclaiming global environmental stewardship while expanding

hydrocarbon frontiers—reveals a dangerous incoherence between rhetoric and reality. Just before COP30, Brazil and other Amazonian nations signed the Declaration of Bogota, a commitment to lead climate diplomacy as a unified front (*8*). Amazonian nations have an opportunity to present a strong, shared position at COP30 and act as a leader in climate negotiations. If these countries seek to lead by example at COP30, then Brazil must reconcile its development strategies with the ecological and ethical imperatives it publicly upholds (*9*). Leadership will not arise from extracting the last drop of oil but from embracing a future anchored in ecological integrity, justice, and genuine commitment to the post–carbon energy transition.

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