

# Brazil Independence Day

## Rio Paralympics: time for empowerment

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Today, Sept. 7 is the National Day of Brazil and the opening day of the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games. After successfully delivering the 2014 Soccer World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, my country will now become the 14th country to host the Summer Paralympic Games, the first in Latin America and the second in the Southern Hemisphere. It is an excellent moment to underline the importance of the Paralympic movement, as well as to share our experience in public policies for people with disabilities.

The 1988 Federal Constitution of Brazil provides the legal framework for a free, democratic and fair country, guided by solidarity and committed to goals such as the inclusion and the empowerment of every person, without prejudice or discrimination of any nature. In 2007, Brazil became one of the first signatories of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as its Optional Protocol. The convention was the first human rights treaty ratified by my country with constitutional amendment status. In other words, the rights established by the U.N. convention are now enshrined in fundamental Brazilian law.

In compliance with the legal determinations, Brazil has been implementing ambitious public policies to enhance the rights of people with disabilities. It is important to remember that a significant proportion of the Brazilian population have some form of disability. This is, of course, a challenge for

the three levels of government — federal, state and municipal — and for the whole Brazilian society.

The main objective of our public policies is to strengthen the participation of people with disabilities by promoting their autonomy, removing barriers and providing access — on an equal basis — to the goods and services offered to the population as a whole. Education, health and accessibility are key components in

these efforts. The dimension of our challenge is even greater for a developing country with a large territory such as Brazil and there is much still to be done.

The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities Act (Federal Law 13.146) came into force this year. The new legislation provides for clear definitions as to who has a disability, turns discrimination against people with disabilities into a crime and lays out quotas for

inclusion and better access. The law also requires the government to collect data and foster research to improve the formulation, management, monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

The law also states that 2.7 percent of the gross revenues of the federal lotteries should be invested in sport, up from the current level of 2 percent. Of this investment, the Brazilian Paralympic Committee should receive 37 percent — a significant increase over the 15 percent of the lottery revenues the committee had been receiving.

As we all know, sports are a powerful driving force of human endeavor. The Rio 2016 Paralympic Games will highlight the collective initiatives that have been undertaken in Brazil toward sports, health, education and the social inclusion of people with any kind of disability.

Major Paralympic athletes are celebrities in my country and swimmer Daniel Dias and sprinter Alan Fonteles are just two examples of this. The evolution of our Paralympic del-



A mural by Brazilian artist Kobra at the Embassy of Brazil in Tokyo pays tribute to composers Tom Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes. THE GOVERNMENT OF BRAZIL



From left: President Michel Temer lights the Rio 2016 Paralympic Torch at a ceremony in Brasilia; The Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Park in Barra da Tijuca THE GOVERNMENT OF BRAZIL



egation illustrates the success of our policies. Brazil went from finishing in 37th place in Atlanta 1996, with only two gold medals, to seventh place

in London 2012, with 21 gold medals. In Rio 2016, I will be rooting for both Brazilian and Japanese Paralympians.

In 2020, Tokyo will become

the first city ever to hold two editions of the Paralympic Games. The meaning of the sequential realization of the Summer Games in Brazil and

in Japan is clear. Our partnership, which reached 120 years in 2015, shall now be strengthened by an inspiring Paralympic bridge from "Rio to Tokyo."

**Congratulations**  
to the People of Brazil  
on the Occasion of the 194th Anniversary of  
Their Independence



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