

Brazil poised for investment grade in '08 -minister

Mon Feb 11, 2008 1:19pm EST

BRASILIA, Feb 11 (Reuters) - Brazil is poised to successfully weather a global economic slowdown and remains on track to reach an investment-grade credit rating this year, Finance Minister Guido Mantega said on Monday.

"We still haven't felt any major impact in Brazil, we haven't felt a slowdown. That doesn't mean there won't be one, but until now there hasn't been anything concrete," Mantega told reporters when asked about the possibility of a global economic slowdown.

Brazil's financial markets have been volatile since concerns emerged that the economic woes in the United States could deepen and spread globally. That scenario could diminish investment flows to emerging markets like Brazil.

Mantega said a robust domestic market will continue to drive the economy even in the event of a global slowdown. He added that the country's economic fundamentals are strong enough for an investment-grade credit rating, which would allow the government to borrow at lower interest rates and attract a wider pool of investors.

"International reserves keep rising, the country is more solvent than ever," Mantega said. "In my view, (investment grade) will come this year."

Brazil, Latin America's largest economy, is rated one notch below investment grade by the major credit rating agencies. Goldman Sachs said in a research report on Monday that Brazil's investment grade "appears on the horizon."
(Reporting by Isabel Versiani; Translated by Todd Benson; Editing by Diane Craft)

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