

Brazil and Argentina, Nuclear Cooperation Héctor Timerman and Antonio Patriota*

July 18 marks the 20th anniversary of the Agreement between the Republic of Argentina and the Federative Republic of Brazil for the Exclusively Peaceful Utilization of Nuclear Energy.

Through this agreement, Argentina and Brazil jointly renounced the development, possession and use of nuclear weapons, affirmed their unequivocal commitment to the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy and created the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) in order to monitor the commitments made.

Five months later both countries signed a quadripartite agreement with ABACC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the application of comprehensive safeguards on all their nuclear facilities.

In political terms, this step substantially transformed the character of our bilateral relations.

The nuclear issue ceased definitively to be a point of possible suspicion and became a central pillar of confidence and cooperation in the strategic relationship between the two South American States, through a negotiation process and a legal structure unprecedented in any other region.

The vast majority of the countries in the world adopted international commitments and controls in the nuclear field by joining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We began this path through the bilateral agreement and the quadripartite agreement, followed by the Treaty of Tlatelolco (which turned Latin America and the Caribbean into a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone) and the NPT.

Brazil and Argentina were also among the first countries to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In legal terms, ABACC's establishment was the culmination of an approximation process that started with the Foz de Iguacu Joint Declaration on Nuclear Policy, adopted in 1985 by the then newly-restored democratic regimes in Argentina and Brazil. At the same time, it was the starting point for the consolidation of our strategic bilateral relationship in a pivotal area of international security.

Within ABACC, an independent agency, inspections at nuclear facilities in Argentina are carried out by Brazilian officials and inspections at Brazilian nuclear facilities are conducted by Argentinean officials. These dynamics have created a high degree of mutual trust on the peaceful nature of both countries' nuclear programs.

Equally important is the confidence that the IAEA has in the work of ABACC. The two agencies operate independently but in a complementary way, seeking synergies and avoiding duplication of efforts.

From this standpoint we have adopted joint positions on the different issues related to nuclear matters. For us, it is clear that the international community should attach the highest priority to nuclear disarmament, as part of the efforts

to prevent proliferation and to build a more peaceful and safer world, free from the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

The recent Joint Statements on Nuclear Cooperation adopted on 3 August 2010 and 31 January 2011 demonstrate the scope and depth that such a relationship has reached, and confirm the commitment of Argentina and Brazil to tread a common path.

Those presidential statements highlighted ABACC's singularity in building mutual and international confidence building on all nuclear activities in Argentina and Brazil and as the foundation of bilateral cooperation in the nuclear field. At the same time, they indicate that ABACC should have its goals and functions constantly improved and strengthened.

In its twentieth anniversary, this consolidated ABACC has begun to participate, as an observer, in the IAEA Board of Governors, as the European agency Euratom, for example, already does.

Furthermore, in a historic coincidence, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), comprising 46 countries, established, less than two weeks ago, new requirements for the transfer of advanced technologies in the nuclear field, and, in an unprecedented decision, recognized ABACC as an alternative to the IAEA Additional Protocol.

The meaning of the Argentine-Brazilian experience in promoting transparency and mutual confidence in the nuclear field was also acknowledged in various IAEA and NPT Conference documents.

It is, therefore, an example and a source of inspiration for other regions of the world, where the presence of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is unfortunately still a reality.

To celebrate ABACC is to celebrate Argentina and Brazil looking at the world from their strategic relationship.

It is to celebrate our regional vocation to peace.

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