

Mr. President,

I would like to begin by congratulating you on your election as president of this 41st General Conference.

I would also like to compliment Mr. Hans Blix who as Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency has strongly contributed to the improvement of safeguards systems and to path the way to make nuclear energy more safe and well accepted throughout the world. I am sure that the adherence of Brazil and Argentina to the system of full scope safeguards, through the Quadripartite Agreement – of which ABACC is also party -- is among the many achievements of your administration. On behalf of the Brazilian-Argentina Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, I wish you happiness and success in the years to come.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei on his designation as Director General for the next four years. We are sure that his knowledge of the Agency and his well known capacity to understand different positions and interests, as well as his ability to find the most constructive solution to controversies, will contribute for the promotion of the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy, which is one of the objectives of the Agency and also of ABACC.

This year the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials completes five years applying regional safeguards in Brazil and in Argentina in the framework of the Agreement for the Exclusively Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, signed by both countries in the city of Guadalajara, Mexico, on 18 July 1991 and in force since 12 December this same year. The bilateral safeguards applied by ABACC submit to its control all nuclear material in all nuclear facilities of Argentina and Brazil since July 1992, when our agency began to operate.

In March 1994, ABACC's full scope safeguards started to be applied together with the International Atomic Energy Agency in accordance with the Quadripartite Agreement between Argentina, Brazil, the IAEA and ABACC. Since its entry into force, the Quadripartite Agreement has been referred to as the safeguards agreement with the IAEA foreseen in the Tlatelolco Treaty. In this context, every six months ABACC submits to the Governments of Brazil and of Argentina a declaration informing if there has been any diversion of nuclear material for non peaceful purposes under the terms of the Tlatelolco Treaty.

Since February 1995, through the Quadripartite Agreement, ABACC has also been participating in the application of full scope safeguards in Argentina, in fulfillment of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In effect, the safeguards established in the Quadripartite Agreement are the same as foreseen in INFCIRC/153 for NPT agreements. With the announcement by the Brazilian Government of its intention to join the NPT, both Argentina and Brazil will fully

integrate the existing non-proliferation agreements, hence reaffirming their historical position of using nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. With regard to the new Additional Protocol to the Quadripartite Safeguards Agreement, ABACC will follow the initiatives of Brazil and Argentina on this matter.

During these five years applying safeguards, ABACC has consolidated its technical and organizational capacity. This was possible only because of the support received from the Governments of Brazil and Argentina; even with the serious economical constraints these two developing countries are facing.

The support of Brazil and Argentina to ABACC has been noticed throughout these years in many aspects. The two countries have given the Secretariat of ABACC the conditions to hire a small but well prepared technical staff and assure the availability of a group of inspectors with the necessary knowledge of different nuclear facilities (who do not work permanently for ABACC). ABACC also counts on the support of Brazilian and Argentine experts and laboratories in some challenging technical questions encountered along these five years.

The technical cooperation support given by the IAEA itself has also been important. We are happy with the decision of the Board of Governors to submit to the approval of this Assembly an agreement that will formalize and increase this cooperation. Other important technical cooperation carried out between ABACC and third countries such as the United States of America, through its Department of Energy, and between ABACC and France, through the Commissariat à l'Énergie Atomique, have also been of relevant significance. Cooperation with EURATOM has increased in importance and should be formalized through an agreement in a near future. We are also confident in the results of new cooperation with other countries, mainly with Japan and South Korea.

ABACC's experience in applying regional safeguards has been taken as reference to regions of the world in which there are tensions that could lead to a nuclear conflict. ABACC has been invited to present its experience in several regional and international meetings, including one promoted by the IAEA.

We understand that regional safeguards consist of an important and efficient instrument to increase confidence among neighbors. The integration of regional safeguards with the international safeguards system could, on the other hand, reinforce international confidence on the peaceful intention of the countries that adopt this type of nuclear safeguards. The scenarios of proliferation are different in different regions; a regional organization can easily consider this issue.

The application of regional safeguards, in addition to international safeguards, should be seen as a means to sum up confidence among the countries of a region, and also of the international community on these countries. We are aware that regional safeguards – in order to be more widely adopted – should increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the safeguards implementation process and this includes economic aspects.

This issue will be discussed by Argentine and Brazilian representatives, as well as members of the international community and by ABACC's technical staff during a seminar that will celebrate ABACC's fifth anniversary, on the 10th of October this year, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Although it is not an easy task to measure the benefits of peace, we can consider that avoiding an eventual nuclear arms race between Brazil and Argentina saved a lot of the human and economic resources. The amount necessary for the well functioning of ABACC is only a small fraction of it. But for our countries the effort to support ABACC is considerable and should assure an effective and concrete return. I strongly believe that these benefits already exist.

I understand that regional safeguards are a promising way towards nuclear non-proliferation and that it is worth the support of the countries involved, as well as of the international community.

Thank you.