

Statement of ABACC at the 48th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency

9/2004

Elías Palacios

Statement by Mr. Elías Palacios, Secretary of the Argentine-Brazilian Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC).

Mister President, distinguished delegates, representatives of guest organizations, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, let me join those who preceded me here and congratulate you for your election as the President of this Forty-Eighth Session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

I will also profit of this opportunity to express the full support of the ABACC to the development of this important meeting.

Mister President, the year elapsed since the last General Conference has been one of great importance and full of undertakings for the ABACC.

Within the context of the strengthening of MERCOSUR, the performance by the ABACC guarantees that the nuclear activities in both countries have exclusively peaceful purposes, thus providing the basis for Argentina and Brazil to further integrate their economic, political, technological and cultural links. The ABACC is proud of contributing to peace and prosperity in our region.

The ABACC has been successfully applying the Common System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, which was created by both countries for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy and was enforced in December 1991. Currently, the ABACC is applying the Common System to all the nuclear materials existing in the 76 nuclear facilities of Argentina and Brazil. In order to verify the inventory, during the last year, the ABACC has performed 110 inspections in nuclear facilities of both countries, with an inspection effort involving more than 400 inspector-days.

The success of the ABACC in the application of the Common System, Mister President, has only been possible because of the permanent support by both countries to the activities of the Secretariat, through the provision of funds and inspectors and making their best consultants and specialized laboratories at ABACC's disposal. The Argentine and Brazilian national authorities in the nuclear area have contributed substantially to these achievements. As a result of the application of the Common System, the ABACC can conclude that, during the last year, both countries have continued to comply with the commitments made in the Bilateral Agreement.

During this year, in spite of several difficulties, the cooperation between the IAEA and the ABACC could be followed up and intensified. A relevant event was the conclusion of a series of activities that will allow both Agencies to implement full safeguards at the Atucha Nuclear Power Plant. For this purpose, the collaboration received from both the Argentina Nuclear Authority and the Plant Operator was highly important.

Mister President, the ABACC expects to further increase its cooperation with the IAEA, so as to conclude, in the short term, the 'Guidelines' for the performance of joint inspections in all the relevant facilities of both countries. The availability of these documents is also a requirement prior to attaining, in the near future, the procedures of the 'New Partnership Approach' type between the ABACC and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Within that context, the ABACC emphasizes that the maintenance and strengthening of fluent communication means between both Agencies is essential in order to increase the efficiency and the efficacy of international safeguards.

The imminent startup of a commercial plant for uranium enrichment in our regional system has been a fundamental issue for the Secretariat during the last year and implies a new challenge concerning the safeguards applied by the ABACC. The Secretariat of the ABACC was able to develop a safeguards approach for the first two cascades in this plant, based on perimeter control, which will allow for an efficient and effective way of applying safeguards and will enable the Operator to preserve their commercial and technological secrets during this first stage.

The approach of the ABACC was negotiated with the Brazilian authorities and is already in a condition to be applied.

However, Mister President, we believe that it is essential that the IAEA, along with the ABACC and the Brazilian national Authority, find a satisfactory approach for this commercial plant, within the framework of the Quadripartite Agreement. This is why we were satisfied with the technical meeting held last week, convinced of the fact that the restart of an open and constructive dialog will allow us to find an approach that will be satisfactory to all the parties.

Hoping to see the end of this stage as soon as possible, I will now finish my presentation.

Thank you, Mister President.