

Statement of ABACC at the 50th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency

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Antonio Abel Oliveira

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

First of all, let me join those who preceded me on the floor and congratulate you for being elected as the President of this Fiftieth Session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

I also want to profit of this opportunity to express the total support of the ABACC during the development of this meeting that you honourably preside and to foretell the achievement of the proposed objectives.

Mr. President, in 2006, the ABACC will be 15 years old; therefore, I want to use the same wording as the Ambassador of the Argentine Republic in Brazil, Dr. J. P. Lohlé, who, in the new issue of our virtual publication in Internet —ABACC News— highlights the role of the ABACC as an essential instrument for transparency and rapprochement throughout the long way involved in the implementation of safeguards and in complying with the active and permanent commitment by both countries in favour of non proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the promotion of the peaceful use of atomic energy.

It must be noted, Mr. President, that, during the event in which we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration of Iguazu of November 30, 1985, Presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Néstor Kirchner signed a Joint Declaration on Nuclear Policy, in which they recalled “the commitments made by means of joint statements since Foz de Iguazú in 1985” and reasserted “the importance of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and of the common system for the verification of nuclear programmes, as mechanisms of mutual trust and transparency, while committing themselves to their strengthening”.

The ABACC has been successfully applying the Common System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, which was created by means of an Agreement between both countries for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy and was enforced in December 1991. Furthermore, on the 13th December 1991, an Agreement was undersigned by the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Argentine Republic, the ABACC and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards, which is known as the Quadripartite Agreement.

The Quadripartite Agreement is a legal instrument that regulates the relationship between the ABACC and the IAEA and establishes the cooperation activities that must be performed with regard to nuclear safeguards. The essential part of the agreement is the Common System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (SCCC), already established between both countries, in which emphasis is made on the fact that both institutions must work in a way so as to avoid the unnecessary duplication of activities. This directive appears expressly in several points of such Agreement.

Currently, the ABACC applies the Common System to all the nuclear materials existing in the approximately 80 nuclear facilities available in Argentina and Brazil. In order to verify the inventory, the ABACC performs approximately 110 inspections in those facilities every year, involving an inspection effort of over 400 inspector-days.

Today, 15 years after its creation, the ABACC can show the world a considerable experience in the compliance with the mission assigned to it. During such period, the ABACC has become a binational agency for the application of safeguards enjoying a great credibility in the international arena, as well as one of the main contributors to the international non-proliferation system.

Mr. President, a mere enunciation of the activities developed by the ABACC includes: verifying that the declarations of their respective nuclear inventories by both countries are complete and correct; developing a single safeguards approach for uranium enrichment plants; implementing joint procedures with the IAEA for the use of equipment and the performance of inspections; the continuous training of its personnel, including technical officials and a team of inspectors; participating in most of the international forums in this field and implementing the safeguard approaches in all the facilities under its control.

The tasks carried out during these 15 years, Mr. President, allow us to state with certainty that both countries —Argentina and Brazil— have performed their activities in the nuclear field and have fully complied with the assumed commitments in the area of nuclear safeguards and of non proliferation, both at the binational level and internationally.

This does not mean, Mr. President, that our mission —the ABACC's mission— has concluded. Contrarily, maintaining the nuclear facilities in both countries under safeguards implies moving permanently throughout a long path that is crowded with challenges.

For this purpose, we have done with the essential support provided by both countries, which supply both human and economic resources and offer the scientific and technical infrastructure in the hands of their national authorities and other agencies in the nuclear field, as required by the ABACC's Secretariat.

One of the major challenges faced by the ABACC during its 15-year existence has been maintaining the quality of its performance and the technical ability of its technical officials and inspectors. For this purpose, since its creation, the ABACC has been developing an intensive training programme on the basis of the permanent evolution in technology and of the concepts applicable to nuclear safeguards.

This training programme has been often extended to inspectors of the IAEA, thus allowing the use of common procedures for auditing accounting records of nuclear materials, operating equipment and performing inspections. It is worth keeping in mind that, in several occasions, the governments of Argentina and Brazil have highlighted the importance of continuous improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the work carried out by the ABACC and the IAEA, thus avoiding the duplication of inspection efforts.

The training programme developed by the ABACC's Secretariat includes seminars, workshops, courses and technical visits, and involves the participation of instructors and lecturers from the national nuclear authorities in both countries and from other

institutions of international prestige, such as the US Department of Energy (DOE), EURATOM and the IAEA.

Mr. President, in the presentation made by the ABACC's Secretariat during the previous General Conference, approximately one year ago, emphasis was made on the importance of the work that was being carried out by the ABACC, the IAEA and the Brazilian Nuclear Energy Commission in order to develop a safeguards approach for the first commercial uranium enrichment plant in Brazil, within the framework of the Quadripartite Agreement.

On the 23rd March of this year, such safeguards approach was approved and the basis were established in order to start applying the agreed regime of inspections. Later on, during the second quarter of the year, the ABACC supplied all the elements for a complete installation of the surveillance system, which has been validated and authenticated by the IAEA.

On the other hand, the ABACC, jointly with the IAEA and the Brazilian National Authority —CNEN—, has just given the first Training Course on Inspection Procedures for the Commercial Uranium Enrichment Plant-BRU-, thus permitting the enforcement of the regime of unannounced inspections in that facility.

Mr. President, the ABACC feels both pride and satisfaction when introducing this example of the achievements made by means of an open and constructive dialogue, an actual guarantee of peace and prosperity in our region.

With regard to future activities, Mr. President, the ABACC will participate, along with the Argentine and Brazilian national authorities and the IAEA, in the next meeting of the Technical Sub-Committee, which will be held in Buenos Aires on the 26th and 27th September.

Considering that, as of January 2007, the IAEA expects to implement the new safeguards approach for nuclear fuel plants, on the basis of short-notice random inspections, both the ABACC and the IAEA expect that this meeting will allow for a

fruitful discussion with the national authorities concerning the relevant points of this new approach, so as to progress towards its timely and adequate implementation.

This meeting is the appropriate forum for an exchange of viewpoints on other current safeguards topics, such as the remote transmission of the operating status of the modern surveillance systems, which would substantially improve efficiency in the application of safeguards, thus reducing the impact of re-verification measures. Taking into account that surveillance systems prepared for this and other remote monitoring applications have been installed in both the Embalse Nuclear Power Plant in Argentina and the Commercial Uranium Enrichment Plant in Brazil, it is expected that, during the forthcoming meeting, the conditions under which the remote transmission tests can be started will be fixed, aiming at their implementation in the near future.

Other topics of interest, such as the reactivation of the negotiation of facility attachments or the possibility of extending the field of application of unannounced inspections —not only in isotopic enrichment facilities— will also be included in the agenda.

The ABACC expects that, during the forthcoming meeting of the Technical Subcommittee, concrete initiatives and guidelines will arise that will allow to continue with the effective and efficient application of safeguards in the region. Within this context, the ABACC emphasises that maintaining and strengthening fluent communication paths between both Agencies is essential.

Mr. President, I want to conclude my presentation mentioning the deep memories of the participation in the ABACC by Dr. Jorge Antonio Coll, the first Secretary of our Agency and an actual pillar in the entity, who passed way earlier this year.

Thank you, Mr. President.