

**Statement of ABACC at the 51st General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency**

9/2007

Odilon Antonio Marcuzzo do Canto

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, representatives of the guest organisations, ladies and gentlemen,

Brazil and Argentina are proud of their history built on the basis of common understanding, in which consensus has been far more outstanding than eventual punctual disputes.

A clear example is the relationship attained by both countries, in connection with the nuclear sector, after the signature—in July 1991— of the Agreement for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy.

While recognising the sovereign right of every nation to have access to nuclear technology for the scientific, technological, economic and social development of their inhabitants, both countries created their Common System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (SCCC). The Agreement implied a clear and definite compromise for the use of all the materials and nuclear facilities submitted to their jurisdictions or control exclusively for peaceful purposes. Today, it represents a paradigmatic framework of the long process of economic, political, technological and cultural integration by both countries.

It was within this context that they created the Brazilian Argentine Agency of Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials—ABACC—, in order to manage and apply the SCCC. On the 13th December this year, we will be completing sixteen years of activities within the framework of the Agreement between Brazil, Argentina, the ABACC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the application of safeguards. In this Quadripartite Agreement, both Member States committed themselves to accept the application of safeguards to all the nuclear materials involved in all the nuclear activities performed within their territories, under their jurisdictions and their control, with a single objective: assuring that such materials would not be diverted for their application in nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices.

The joint work by the ABACC and the IAEA allowed to create an atmosphere of mutual confidence that resulted in the excellent results obtained throughout these sixteen years.

Mr. Chairman,

The current status of civilisation, with its ever-growing energy requirements, does not allow for any further naive positions. We cannot accept that enormous portions of the world population be left out of development and of the fruits it bears. Now that humanity is starting to realise that its impact upon the environment can lead to its own destruction, nuclear energy is aimed at playing a leading role. Nowadays, several nations are taking a new approach to nuclear reactors as reliable sources of energy with zero contribution to the greenhouse effect; this, in turn, leads to an expectation of growth in all the activities related to the nuclear production chain.

On the other hand, political instability and the complexity of the relationship among nations and communities, associated with the simplicity of communications in this globalised world, produce an outlook of concern with regard to the possibilities of diversion of nuclear materials for belligerent purposes.

This context gives way to a huge responsibility for the sectors of society with access to the scientific and technological knowledge liable to make nuclear power generation both economically feasible and inherently safe.

During the last 52 years, history has demonstrated that, undoubtedly, the best way to guarantee a peaceful use of nuclear energy is promoting understanding and co-operation among nations. Co-operation and mutual understanding have been the basis for the joint work performed by the IAEA and the ABACC in the application of safeguards, as provided in the Quadripartite Agreement.

Argentina and Brazil have already made a clear decision to reactivate their respective nuclear programmes. “Solar and wind energy are not feasible in Brazil at a large scale. Studies have demonstrated that nuclear energy is the alternative satisfying large-scale energy demands in a clean and safe manner”, stated Dr. Sergio Machado Rezende, the Brazilian Minister of Science and Technology, in a recent interview. On the other hand, during the last meeting of the Bilateral Permanent Joint Commission on Energy Matters,

the Argentine Minister of Federal Planning, Investments and Services, Dr. Julio de Vida, was also emphatic in reasserting the decision by the Argentine Government to reactivate their nuclear programme, with investments in the order of 3.5 billion US dollars.

This context implies an even more significant role of the ABACC, involving an increase in its activities of inspection, accounting and control for the years to come.

2006 was a very important and successful year for the ABACC with regard to its task for safeguarding nuclear facilities and all of the nuclear materials in Brazil and Argentina.

In compliance with its institutional mission, the ABACC guarantees that, in 2006, all of the nuclear materials and the rest of the safeguarded elements in both Brazil and Argentina were used exclusively for peaceful purposes and were properly accounted for. After completing its tasks in this period, the ABACC did not find any signs of non compliance with the commitments undertaken by both countries.

These successful results were attained thanks to the efforts made by the officials, technicians, inspectors, consultants and laboratories in both countries, all of them working under the supervision and guidance of the ABACC's Commission.

In the field of training, in co-operation with the IAEA, the ABACC promoted courses in the fields of containment and surveillance and of unannounced inspections for its own inspectors and those of the IAEA. We consider that systematic training is an essential tool for guaranteeing the high-quality level of the ABACC's performance.

The search for excellence has been a constant concern in ABACC's history; for this purpose, a policy has been developed for the qualification of its officials and staff of inspectors. The co-operation received from the IAEA, the Department of Energy of the United States and the European Atomic Energy Community have been crucial in these undertakings. These efforts were mainly focused to the areas of non-destructive analyses, containment and surveillance, training courses and safeguards approaches.

The good results attained in the joint safeguards activities and procedures, with regard to unannounced inspections and the joint use of safeguards equipment units, reflect the high level of understanding and co-operation reached by both Agencies.

Additionally, both organisations have been working jointly in the development and improvement of safeguards approaches, in modern and secure communication systems, and in inspector training. During the last year, significant progress was made in the approach concerning unannounced and short-notice random inspections.

Both the Argentine and the Brazilian authorities have repeatedly stressed the relevance of the co-operation between the ABACC and the IAEA. Both organisations have also been asked to coordinate their tasks with a permanent goal: an efficient management of the cost of safeguards activities, avoiding any unnecessary duplication of efforts.

Offering incentives for co-operation between Regional Systems and the IAEA has been a reason for concern by its Board of Governors, which—in article 7 of INFCIRC/153—highlights the role of regional agencies and establishes that the Agency must give consideration to their technical efficiency. Besides, the enhancement of co-operation with the national or regional systems was one of the actions identified for the improvement of the effectiveness and the efficiency of safeguards in Part I of the so-called ‘Programme 93+2’ approved in 1995.

Mr. Chairman,

I would also like to draw attention to the co-operative basis on which safeguards implementation is being conducted within the framework of the Quadripartite Agreement.

Currently, the development of new technologies for the application of safeguards—such as new surveillance devices and state-of-health transmission, the replacement of certain inspection regimes that allow more efficient safeguards, and innovative safeguards approaches—are being discussed and evaluated by the ABACC, the IAEA and the member states with a very proactive attitude that will bring along relevant safeguards improvements.

While complying with its institutional mission, the ABACC has looked forward to prompting actions aimed at exploring the capabilities of the scientific and technological institutions in both countries. The development of a new UF<sub>6</sub> sampling method (the so-called “ABACC-Cristallini Method”), based on its capacity for adsorption in aluminium oxide pellets, is an example. The results obtained so far have been promising, indicating that this method is liable to replace, with great advantages (lower costs and a smaller number of rejections), the current technique of sampling in ampoules.

It also needs to be noted that, at the moment, the ABACC’s staff is being renewed, in both its managerial and operational sectors. Necessarily, this process requires the transfer of knowledge, experiences and skills that are essential for continuing with a good performance, while the organisation gets ready for facing new challenges. In a recent article by Jacques Baute, Director of Information Management of the IAEA’s Safeguards Department, published in the JNMM Magazine, the author provides a very appropriate description of the implications involved in such processes.

As a conclusion, profiting of the opportunity of this 51st General Conference, the ABACC reasserts its commitment for improving its performance in the application of safeguards in Brazil and Argentina, while keeping the necessary secrecy of the safeguards information in a transparent manner before both countries and the international community, as established in the framework of the Quadripartite Agreement.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, please accept our votes for a Conference full of good results and our appreciation for giving us the opportunity to deliver these statements.

Thank you all.