

Speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brasil in the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of ABACC at Palacio San Martín

2011

Minister Antonio Patriota

His Excellency Héctor Timerman, Foreign Minister of the Argentine Republic, His Excellency Minister De Vido, His Excellency Mr. Yukyia Amano, Director General of IAEA, His Excellency Mr. Odilon Marcuzzo do Canto, Secretary of ABACC. Members of parliament and other authorities, Ambassadors and other members of the diplomatic corps, Ladies and Gentlemen:

First, I would like to congratulate the Argentine Government on the timely initiative to host this event, in the context of this year's celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC).

The distinguished presence of the Director General of IAEA and the Secretary of ABACC among us strengthens the meaning and significance of this ceremony. The signatory parties to the Quadripartite Agreement of 1991, the ultimate and final legal expression of both countries' political commitment —between themselves and before the international community— to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes only, are gathered here today.

Transparency, dialogue, the promotion of trust and cooperation in the nuclear field have been and continue to be key elements in the process for integrating and building closer relations between Brazil and Argentina, which gathered momentum with the redemocratization of both countries in the mid-eighties. Ever since then, as stated by Director General Amano in his outstanding news article published today, both countries have gradually built a political path which, after a few steps, became irreversible.

The recent declarations by both Presidents, the mutual visits by the heads of state and high-ranking officials —including those to the nuclear facilities of both countries— and other very significant political gestures have cleared, once and for all, any suspicions and rivalries —which belong more to the realm of imagination than reality— regarding an alleged arms race, thus giving rise to a new and promissory stage in the bilateral relationship. The intensification of this process was a key element in the conception and origin of the MERCOSUR and, later, UNASUR integration projects.

Nowadays, UNASUR is a space of cooperation for the development of the continent as a peaceful zone. Peace, in this respect, is a distinctive characteristic of our region. On this special date, ABACC and the Quadripartite Agreement must be recognized as important contributions to the strengthening of the peaceful and pacifist mission of South America.

By means of additional measures which reinforced their positions in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, Brazil and Argentina took the necessary steps in order to give effect, at a domestic level, to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which created, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the first Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in a densely populated region; adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); became members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and were among the first countries to have signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In Brazil, the National Constitution provides that nuclear activities within the national territory will only be allowed if carried out for peaceful purposes.

Dialogue and cooperation in the nuclear field have become a permanent goal in the foreign policies of both Brazil and Argentina. In the Joint Declaration made on 31 January by President Dilma Rousseff and President Cristina Kirchner, they reiterated that –nuclear bilateral cooperation —based on political dialogue, the consolidation of trust and the close coordination of safeguards— is an inalienable common asset of the strategic partnership between Brazil and Argentina.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

ABACC is the only binational organization in the world to deal with the enforcement of nuclear safeguards. Created in July 1991, the Agency was in charge of implementing the Common System of Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (SCCC). Five months later, in December of the same year, the Quadripartite Agreement was executed, whereby Brazil and Argentina's nuclear programmes became subject to the so-called comprehensive safeguards, which apply to all activities involving nuclear materials in both countries. Brazil and Argentina are subject to a double-safeguard system —including both ABACC's and IAEA's safeguards— as well as to the domestic surveillance carried out by national regulatory agencies. There are currently 67 facilities subject to these safeguards in both countries. ABACC is independent from the two governments and from IAEA itself. However, close cooperation with IAEA is inherent in the agreement. The success attained

in sharing responsibilities has led to an increase in the tasks performed by ABACC in the system. We hope that IAEA's trust in the quality and integrity of the work of ABACC will continue to grow indefinitely.

The Brazil-Argentina agreement is more than a safeguard system which connects a State to IAEA, as is the case with non-nuclear-armed countries that take part in the NPT. ABACC's operation, in coordination with IAEA, has led to an unprecedented degree of transparency and knowledge. The dynamics of the process currently make it possible for Brazil and Argentina to know more about each other's nuclear programmes than any other two neighbouring countries.

We are greatly pleased that Brazil and Argentina's contribution is recognized in various fora and in documents approved within the framework of the NPT and IAEA. This year, ABACC was given the status of observer at the meetings of the IAEA Board of Governors. Only two weeks ago, the NSG gave another significant sign. After six years of negotiations, the Group managed to approve new guidelines for the transfer of the most sensitive technologies in the nuclear field and restricted them to countries that meet the highest standards on physical protection, security and nuclear safeguards. In doing so, the NSG expressly recognized the Quadripartite Agreement as an alternative criterion to the Additional Protocol (AP) and stressed that such Protocol does not amount to a legal obligation under the NPT or within the framework of IAEA. The decision made by the NSG confirms both countries' competence and gives rise to new perspectives with regard to cooperation and access to the necessary technologies for the development of their respective nuclear programmes.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In talking about the development of nuclear programmes, I must refer to yet another aspect of the interaction between Brazil and Argentina. In March 2008, we established the Binational Commission of Nuclear Energy (COBEN) to coordinate the cooperation initiatives in this field. Various projects have been carried out within the context of COBEN in the areas of reactors, nuclear applications, regulation and fuel cycle. Those projects include the project for joint development of multi-purpose research reactors. Last January, after verifying that the respective research reactor projects were sufficiently similar, the Brazilian Nuclear Energy Commission (CNEN) and the Argentine Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA) signed an agreement for the joint development of the basic

reactor project. The implementation of this project will be a milestone in bilateral cooperation which will encourage both countries to intensify the activities in areas such as radioisotope production and fuel and material irradiation testing.

Another project of the Commission of Nuclear Energy that was commended after the accidents with the nuclear reactors in Japan is the –Strengthening of Responsiveness to Radiation and Nuclear Emergencies. We wish to share experiences and promote further integration in the responsiveness to any accidents of both countries. We also seek to coordinate our positions for the discussion that already started in IAEA on the reinforcement of nuclear safety, following the recently concluded and timely Ministerial Conference promoted by the Director General, Yukia Amano. A high-level meeting on this issue will be held in September, in New York, on the occasion of the opening of the United Nations General Assembly.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to conclude my speech on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ABACC with a reflection on the example of Brazil and Argentina as a source of inspiration for other regions of the world, such as the Middle East, the Korean Peninsula or South Asia. This idea becomes even more significant in view of an upcoming Conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Zone free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East. We obviously cannot ignore the differences between the geopolitical contexts that would prevent a mechanical application of the ABACC model, which would require adjustments to each region's specific challenges. In addition to defining the concept of Zones Free of Nuclear Weapons, which is valid for all regions where such Zones do not exist yet, the Brazilian-Argentine agreement on a system of double international and regional safeguards would have specific merits for further promoting mutual trust. We must take advantage of this occasion, on which we celebrate two decades of a relationship based on transparency and trust, to reach out to other countries desirous of seeing in more depth how Brazil and Argentina were able to start and carry forward this partnership. The establishment of ABACC thus appears as one of the elements of our track record of increasing integration in an environment of development with social inclusion, of enhancement of our democratic roots, of prosperity and peace, to the benefit of our countries, our region and the world.