

Statement of secretary of ABACC Odilon Marcuzzo do Canto at the 57th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency
Sept. 2013

Mister President, Distinguished Delegates, representatives of the guest institutions, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mister President, I am pleased to greet you and to express our most sincere wishes for your mandate in the presidency of this Conference to be crowned with a great success.

First of all, I want to thank the International Atomic Energy Agency for honoring us with an invitation to participate in this fifty-seventh General Conference and to express our understanding that this is always a highly significant event for the ABACC. It is the opportunity for us to let the international nuclear community know about some of our actions and achievements—which we judge significant—and reaffirm our willingness and commitment to comply with our institutional mission as the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for the Management of the Common System of Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials.

Mister President, Distinguished Delegates,

Argentina and Brazil were able to establish a safeguards system that is unique in today's world. Consolidated and matured throughout these twenty-two years, it has gained respect from the international community. This perception is reinforced by a good number of academic thesis and articles that were recently published in journals and specialized magazines of different parts of the world. In these publications, the Argentine-Brazilian safeguards system has been labeled as a successful experience and—considering the political and social characteristics of the diverse regions—liable to be replicated.

Indeed, it is safe to say that this system evidences advantages when compared with the general safeguards agreements. The Quadripartite Agreement goes far beyond the usual safeguards regimes connecting a member State with the IAEA. It comprises two neighboring member States, a safeguards agency created by both of them—the ABACC—and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Therefore, it represents a far more complete, efficient and effective safeguards regime.

The arrangements of the ABACC type constitute a clear demonstration of the political will in the countries involved to apply total transparency to their nuclear programs. The creation of an environment of mutual confidence facilitates understanding among the parties, produces the conditions required to face technological challenges and, at the same time, promotes the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Evidently, our intention is not promoting a direct transposition of the ABACC model to other regions. This would be, minimally, a gross reductionism. The geopolitical features of the various regions and the cultural differences that may hinder a direct transposition of models need to be taken into account. Each one of the experiences must be considered within the corresponding context and the social and political environment.

Nevertheless, we believe that the idea of establishing regional safeguards agencies, applying the concept of “neighbors watching neighbors”, making use of effective safeguards actions and with an international projection, is a possibility that is worth to be borne in mind.

On the other hand, fairly realistic projections suggest a scenario involving the construction of new reactors all over the world. This is very promising for the coming decades and both Argentina and Brazil play a role in such scenario. The latest projections by the IAEA indicate a growth comprising ninety new reactors until 2030. Undoubtedly, this projection implies significant challenges in the fields of safeguards and non proliferation.

We have repeatedly mentioned in this forum that a way to face the future challenges would be promoting the creation and the strengthening of independent and reliable regional systems that could be applied in coordination with the IAEA, thus optimizing the available resources. The success attained with the experience of ABACC, after 22 years of performance in the application of safeguards as a binational agency, can be a source of orientation.

Mister President,

As it occurs every year, once more, I want to profit of this opportunity to inform the international nuclear community of the fact that, in 2012, 120 inspections were performed in the nuclear facilities of Brazil and Argentina, all of them coordinated among the ABACC, the IAEA and the nuclear authorities in both countries. As a result, we can guarantee that all the nuclear materials and other elements under safeguards, in both Brazil and Argentina, were used exclusively for peaceful purposes and properly registered in their accounting systems. Upon completion of its tasks in this period, the ABACC did not find any clues suggesting the breach of the commitments made by these countries.

Furthermore, it is worth recalling that —on the 13th December 1991— Brazil, Argentina, the IAEA and the ABACC undersigned a Quadripartite Agreement by which both countries committed themselves to accept safeguards applied to all the nuclear materials in all the nuclear activities carried out within their territories, under their jurisdictions or under their control, with the single goal of assuring that such materials would not be deviated for their application to nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices. All of the activities performed by the ABACC for the application of safeguards are carried out in full agreement with the IAEA, respecting independence in the decisions made by each one of the agencies and always under the terms of the Quadripartite Agreement.

As it occurs in any other human activity, the efficient and effective application of safeguards suffers the impacts of scientific and technological developments that contribute with innovations that can be incorporated to their processes. The three-dimensional images obtained with laser rays and environmental samples are important tools that can enhance the safeguards systems, making them more effective and reducing inspection efforts. Recently, in view of this fact, the ABACC signed a technical cooperation agreement with the European Community, aimed at developing

methods for the use of the three-dimensional laser technology and ultrasonic seals for improving safeguards in special facilities.

It is important to recognize that the strong integration of the ABACC with the IAEA, and with the rest of the international agencies devoted to the application of safeguards, has promoted an exchange of experiences and knowledge that proved to be extremely enriching for all of us.

I emphasize our special appreciation and express our recognition to all of them for these over twenty years of cooperation and joint growth.

The capacity to keep the pace with these advancements is in direct relation to the training and the continuous improvement of the human resources of any institution. Aware of this reality, the ABACC has been developing institutional policies that privilege this issue. The search for excellence has been a constant concern in the history of our Agency and, consequently, it has developed a policy of permanent training for its officials, technicians and inspectors.

The support and recognition that ABACC has received from both the Brazilian and the Argentine governments has been a key factor in attaining success. Such support and recognition have been constant and not only with the historical series of joint statements. Beyond the latter, they have taken shape with the financial support given to the activities and programs of the ABACC and with the preservation of its institutional independence. This is evidenced by the permanent backup offered by the Argentine and Brazilian representatives before the IAEA —Ambassadors Rafael Grossi and Laercio Vinhas— respectively, to whom I am forwarding our special appreciation. Also outstanding and in a very palpable manner, is the technical cooperation between the ABACC and the laboratories in diverse agencies and institutions of both countries, with the most comprehensive support by both governments.

Finally, I want to stress the uniqueness of ABACC as a regional safeguards agency, reaffirming its compromise with efficiency and effectiveness in the application of the safeguards procedures in Brazil and Argentina in a transparent manner, maintaining the required confidentiality of the data and going from strength to strength in its cooperation with the IAEA, within the framework of the Quadripartite Agreement.

Please, Mister President, accept our best wishes for a Conference full of good results, along with our appreciation for granting us the opportunity to make this presentation.

MANY THANKS to all of you.