

Statement of the secretary of ABACC Antonio Abel Oliveira at the 58th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Sep. 2014

Mr. President, Mr. Director General, distinguished delegates, representatives of guest organizations, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I wish to join those who took the floor before and congratulate you for your election as the President of this fifty-eighth session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I will profit of this occasion to express the full support of the ABACC for the development of this meeting and, in advance, to predict its successful results. Since our last encounter, ABACC continued to provide guarantees concerning the exclusively pacific use of the nuclear activities in Argentina and Brazil, by means of independent conclusions supported by a technical base and by the competence and the appropriateness of its inspectors and officials. The 118 inspections carried out during this period—in co- ordination with the IAEA—are the key components of the Common System for Accounting and Control managed by the ABACC and allow us to confirm, once more, the compliance with the commitments made by Argentina and Brazil. Such performance, in addition to the joint use by ABACC and the IAEA of state-of- the-art equipment and technology applicable in the nuclear facilities of both countries, does not only supplement the verification, but also facilitates the application of more efficient and stronger safeguards by both Agencies.

Mr. President, during this year, ABACC continued to support the growth of nuclear activities in Argentina and Brazil, providing a response to the safeguards challenges faced. Among them, to mention only a few, we must note the progress made in the facilities for uranium enrichment in both countries, the start-up of the Atucha II Nuclear Power Plant (recently named as “President Néstor Kirchner”), the progress attained in the installation of the plant for the production of uranium hexafluoride in Brazil and the initiation of the construction of the CAREM reactor in Argentina.

I want to put special emphasis on the role of co-operation in the application of safeguards. Co-operation—the pillar of the verification system and axis of regional and international safeguards—has been fundamental for the correct performance of our nuclear verification activities.

With satisfaction, we can say —Mr. President— that, in this period, ABACC played a

leading role in promoting high-level interaction between the parties and in contributing with technical proposals to the advancement and conclusion of appropriate safeguards approaches and activities for relevant facilities of the nuclear fuel cycle in both countries. We need only to mention the progress made with the unattended monitoring system, covering the transfer of fuel elements at the Embalse Nuclear Power Plant and the safeguards measures applied in the Brazilian and Argentine conversion plants and uranium enrichment facilities.

More recently, during last July, an excellent working and co-operation environment was experienced within the Liaison Committee of the Quadripartite Agreement —the decision-making and orientation body concerning aspects related to the implementation of safeguards in Brazil and Argentina—, when significant progress was made in substantial safeguards issues, within the framework of the above-mentioned Agreement.

Furthermore, technical co-operation plays a leading role in ensuring that ABACC is applying new front- edge technologies and exploring —in co-operation with the IAEA— technological changes that will have an impact upon the application of safeguards.

During this period, Mr. President, ABACC and the IAEA agreed on the procedures for their joint use of the next generation surveillance systems and, in co-operation with the National Authorities in Brazil and Argentina, progress was made concerning the possibility of remote transmission of the state of health of the safeguards equipment units. Within this technical environment, ABACC wants to reiterate its decision referred to the validation of the uranium hexafluoride sampling method named “ABACC-Cristallini” and to start applying it as soon as possible. For this purpose, ABACC —along with the Safeguards Support Programmes in Brazil and Argentina— is also encouraging the approval of such method by the IAEA. The method, based on the adsorption capacity of UF₆ by aluminium oxide pellets, will allow us to substitute the traditional UF₆ sampling system with significant technical advantages, minimising costs, facilitating transportation and reducing the amount of radioactive wastes.

Mr. President, ABACC is approaching its twenty-fifth anniversary. Upon completion of this quarter of a century, its creators —Argentina and Brazil—, confirm their full commitment with their strategic decision and with the exclusively pacific development and use of nuclear energy, by means of an architecture supported by foundations of confidence, co-operation and verification. Our growing bilateral co-operation in the nuclear arena, resulting in concrete projects —such as the construction, in both countries, of multi-

purpose reactors for the production of radiopharmaceuticals for healthcare, a process that ABACC has been supporting since its very beginning— does nothing but confirm the significance and the validity of the adopted model. A model that responds to the realities in these countries and in a region that was declared a nuclear-weapon free zone over 50 years ago.

At this point, Mr. President, we must also stress the role played by ABACC and its conclusions within the framework of the Tlatelolco Treaty, as well as the Agency's co-operation with OPANAL, in their attempt to continue to serve as models guaranteeing the pacific use of nuclear energy and the absence of any form of existence of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. President, Argentina and Brazil were able to establish a safeguards system that is currently unique in the world and that, consolidated and strengthened throughout more than twenty years, has gained respect by part of the international nuclear community.

The mature ABACC-IAEA relationship, built as time went by, allows both institutions to work in tune with each other and with great objectivity. The co-operation arrangements between both entities for the application of safeguards were developed and put in force respecting the basic principles of the Quadripartite Agreement: the joint performance of inspections, the coordination of activities so as to avoid the duplication of human resources and materials, and independence in the decisions reached by each Agency.

On the basis of these principles, numberless mechanisms were developed for joint activities involving the use of equipment units, personnel and analyses for the application of safeguards, thus attaining a great optimisation of the resources. The strong interaction between ABACC and the other international actors involved in the application of safeguards regimes promotes the exchange of experience and knowledge that is enriching for all of them. ABACC has benefitted from its co-operation with the IAEA, with EURATOM, with the United States Department of Energy, with nuclear institutes in the European Community and with the national authorities in Argentina and Brazil.

On the other hand, its relationship with other international partners —such as those in Canada, for the development of training courses, and in South Korea, France, Japan and the United Kingdom, for conceptual development in the application of safeguards, has been highly productive. Furthermore, our participation in international forums organised by societies involved in the area of safeguards, such as ESARDA and the INMM, have led

to an exchange of ideas and of relevant experiences that have been fruitful for the qualification of ABACC. I also want to stress, Mr. President, the participation of ABACC —as an Observer— in the meetings of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, since 2011.

Mr. President, since its creation, ABACC has been applying institutional policies aimed at the permanent technical training of its human resources. The application of such policies, along with our use of state-of-the-art equipment, is a relevant factor for the success of our Agency and for the independence of its conclusions.

A key factor in the success attained has been the recognition and the permanent support received by ABACC from both the Brazilian and the Argentine governments. This has been demonstrated by the historical series of joint statements made by their latest governments, which is made evident by the endeavour applied by their chancellorships and by the members of the Commission in ensuring a good performance by the Agency, guaranteeing the necessary budget resources for its operation and preserving its institutional independence, these being essential factors for the achievement of its mission and for reaching the objectives for which it was created.

The training of ABACC's staff, both in its operative body and among its inspectors, is an unequivocal demonstration of such support: all the inspectors are from institutions of both countries involved in the nuclear area. Our Agency's technical co-operation with laboratories in several Argentine and Brazilian agencies and institutions has always had the endorsement of both governments. This support is materialised in the obtainment of the results of the verifications performed by ABACC, respecting the independence and the credibility of our Institution. On the other hand, Mr. President, in the near future and on the basis of the statements made by both governments during the last few years, both ABACC and the IAEA, along with other stakeholders, must face the application of the Special Procedures contained in Art. 13 of the Quadripartite Agreement to the nuclear materials that are to be submitted to safeguards as per such Agreement and that are used for driving nuclear-powered or nuclear-operated vehicles of any sort, including submarines and prototypes.

I want to conclude my statement, Mr. President, stressing that both ABACC and the IAEA agree on the fact that there is yet a fertile field to be explored regarding an actual enhancement of our co-operation,

for which ABACC continues to work for the identification and materialisation of co-operation agreements by which both Agencies can comply with their goals and mandates in an efficient manner.

Mr. President, Distinguished Representatives, I thank you all for this opportunity of sharing with you the most outstanding landmarks in the work performed by ABACC since our last encounter and I express our hopes for a General Conference full of achievements.

Thank you very much.