

## **Status of the Cooperation Between ABACC and AIEA**

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The Quadripartite Agreement and its Subsidiary Arrangements, which came into effect in March 1994, determine that ABACC and IAEA shall cooperate and coordinate their activities in order to avoid the duplication of the safeguards system of ABACC and to strengthen the application of global safeguards, considering the technical capacity of the regional system and allowing each organization to carry out their responsibilities and obtain independent conclusions.

In 2002, the IAEA organized a technical meeting with the purpose of analysing and discussing the possibility to increase the cooperation with the regional or national accounting and control systems. On that occasion, three levels of cooperation were clearly outlined. The lowest level, called enabling level, is a very limited cooperation level chiefly directed to render easier the inspections by IAEA. The intermediate level, called joint activities, is essentially oriented to share inspection activities in order to obtain a more efficient system, based on the criterion of one person only for each task. Finally, the highest level of cooperation, called quality assurance, implies the delegation by IAEA of some inspection activities in regional or national systems that are adequately qualified and enjoy recognized credibility, although IAEA retains the right to audit randomly the activities carried out by its "partner".

Important improvements were made and the cooperation between both organizations progressed since the ratification of the Guides for the Coordination of Routine Inspection Activities between ABACC and IAEA and ad hoc, in 1997. Both organizations started to cooperate and coordinate their activities in accordance with the general concept established in this document. From then on, the representatives of each organization started to meet twice a year to exchange their opinions on all the activities scheduled to be performed in common, such as inspections, the shared use of containment and surveillance equipment, the negotiation of application manuals, guides for joint inspections, auditing methods, qualifying and training programs, approaches to safeguards that are being developed, the shared use of calibration standards and portable devices, as well as the adoption of a methodology based on

mutual agreement for the verification of non-destructive analyses. Furthermore, lines of action involving pending questions are being agreed upon, and points of view are being exchanged concerning the new standards and criteria IAEA intends to introduce in the sphere of the Common Accounting and Control System for Nuclear Materials which ABACC manages.

The main purpose of the coordination meetings is to establish lines of common action that will enable ABACC and IAEA to improve their efficiency and strengthen the effectiveness of the present system of safeguards, considering ABACC's technical capacity and allowing each organization to draw independent conclusions. Over the last years, a better coordination of the activities involving safeguard inspections was observed as a result of these discussions, as well as the successful routine of shared use of portable devices and containment and surveillance equipment, of calibration standards and of methods for non-destructive analyses. Since 2001, important structural changes occurred in both organizations. Inspection and coordinating staff were substituted on both sides. As a natural consequence of these changes, some deficiencies in communication were observed during the first half of 2003, as well as a delay in the implementation of common-use procedures and the loss of contact persons to put forward the elaboration of the joint inspection guides. On this behalf, the last meeting of the coordination was postponed from June to September 2003, as some changes in the IAEA coordination were also expected. At last, the meeting was held at ABACC's headquarters and it resulted in the establishment of new bases to continue the cooperation between the two organizations.

ABACC shall continue to bear fully its responsibilities and shall improve the qualification of the cooperation level of joint inspections in order to achieve a more efficient safeguards system. In the near future, therefore, ABACC's safeguards system shall keep concentrating efforts in the fuel cycle stages that involve nuclear materials from which it is possible to develop nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, the legal negotiations as established by the Quadripartite Agreement shall go on in order to find long term solutions, without interfering with the good results obtained in the sphere of common work.