

Discurso feito pelo Dr. Odilon Marcuzzo do Canto na Reunião Anual da ESARDA

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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 commitment 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, on July 18th, 1991, the Brazilian Argentine Agency of Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials —ABACC— was created, with the mission of managing and applying the SCCC.

The historical process of trust generation was started in 1980 when, on May 17, the two presidents signed the Cooperation Agreement for the Development and Application of the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, by which an attempt was made to set up the necessary conditions for a reciprocal knowledge of both nuclear programs.

This agreement was the starting point of a new approach by both countries to face the restrictions that were being imposed all over the world to the access to high technology and nuclear goods and services, pointing out the recent perception of the importance of bilateral cooperation in strategic areas such as the nuclear one.

On the 13th December this year, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary 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 by the Agencies 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 and activities 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 creating an atmosphere of mutual confidence that resulted in the excellent results obtained throughout these twenty years.

During this period more than 1.500 inspections were carried out in both countries. Last year, 58 inspections in Argentine facilities and 41 in Brazilian facilities were accomplished, involving 854 inspectors-day.

The system established by Argentina and Brazil is not only “sui generis” but also presents clear advantages in comparison to safeguards agreements in general. The Quadripartite Agreement goes beyond a safeguard regime that connects a state party and the AIEA. It involves two neighbouring States parties, and an agency created by them – the ABACC- , and the International Agency. It forms thus a much more comprehensive safeguards regime.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The aftermath of the Fukushima’s power plant nuclear accident as a consequence of the massive earthquake and tsunami of March 11, are yet to be seen. Even though the future of the so called nuclear renaissance, is now directly connected with the capacity of the nuclear industry to prove the inherent safety of nuclear technology, the chances that those nations that relay heavily on thermal sources for energy production would turn their back to nuclear, are very little.

This, together with the international community's growing concern about proliferation and the possibility of nuclear materials ending up in hands of terrorist groups, will impose an extra burden on the AIEA's responsibilities on safeguard activities.

A way of facing these challenges will be promoting the creation of independent and reliable regional systems that can be applied in a coordinated manner with AIEA, while optimizing the available resources.

In this regard, the success attained by ABACC's experience after 20 years as a binational agency applying safeguards, may serve as guidance. It is a fact that the regional geopolitical characteristics and cultural differences do not allow for a direct transposal of models; however, the central idea of developing regional agencies making use of the "neighbours-watching-neighbours" concept is a possibility that is worth trying.

Offering incentives for co-operation between Regional Systems and the IAEA has been a reason for concern by the 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.

My Friends,

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. Technical cooperation programs developed with several international partners has been of fundamental importance in this regard. Among them I would like to underline, in this opportunity, our past and ongoing programs with ESARDA. It is of special interest the participation on ESARDA's working groups such as Techniques and Standards for Destructive Analysis, Techniques and Standards for Non Destructive Analysis, Containment and Surveillance, Implementation of Safeguards and Training and Knowledge Management. ABACC's participation on the main ESARDA's events

like the annual meeting and annual working group's workshop has been occasions for renewing our ties and reinforcing our mutual objectives.

The partnership ESARDA-ABACC has been, in our perception, a very fruitful one and beneficial for both institutions.

Therefore, it is for us a pleasure and an honour, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of ABACC with our friends and partners of ESARDA.

Thank you!