

**“The contribution of bilateral arrangements to regional and
global peace and security objectives”**

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ABACC – Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Foz do Iguaçu Summit Declaration. This Declaration was made by the presidents of Argentina and Brazil on November 30, 1990. It constituted a milestone in the process of rapprochement between the two countries, which had begun in the mid-1980. This achievement was the fruit of a stepwise process of confidence building that included declarations, cooperation arrangements, technical visits and joint meetings.

Through this Declaration the two countries decided: (a) to approve the Common System of Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials; (b) to establish a system of mutual safeguards inspections, as provided in that Common System; (c) to undertake negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency to conclude a joint comprehensive safeguards agreement based on the Common System; and (d) once the comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA is concluded, to fully put into force the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, the so-called Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Almost eight months later, in July 1991, the Agreement between the Republic of Argentina and the Federative Republic of Brazil for the Exclusive Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy - the Bilateral Agreement - was signed in Guadalajara, Mexico. This Agreement entered into force in December 1991.

The Bilateral Agreement created the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) to administer the Common System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials.

ABACC's mission is to verify that all nuclear materials in all nuclear activities in the two countries are used for exclusively peaceful purposes, or in other words, to ensure that both countries are complying with the terms and commitments of the Bilateral Agreement.

The Common System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials goes far beyond the regime of inspections and other safeguards verification activities implemented by ABACC. The General Procedures of the Common System define, with force of law, from the

safeguards standpoint, the rights and obligations of the Operator of each nuclear facility, and of the National Authorities of the two countries.

The Bilateral Agreement reaffirms the principles of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Thus, in applying its safeguards, ABACC is also ensuring that the two countries are fulfilling their commitments under the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Moreover, in the case of a critical non-compliance with the terms of the Bilateral Agreement by one Party, the other Party is authorized to notify it to the UN Secretary-General, and the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that ABACC and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (OPANAL) signed a cooperation agreement in May 1993, which set up the basis for consultations between the two organizations. In this context, ABACC provides to OPANAL a semi-annual report with its safeguards' conclusion.

The entry into force of the Bilateral Agreement represented a significant historical fact, unique in the world, which marks the deepening of cooperation between two countries that for many years were seen as participants in a nuclear race.

The mutual trust and confidence established by Argentina and Brazil through the Bilateral Agreement in a sensitive area such as nuclear energy made it possible that, one year later, the Common Market between the two countries, Paraguay and Uruguay, called Mercosur, was created. As a result, trade between the two countries went from US\$1.5 billion in 1991 to about US\$ 30 billion in recent years. The mutual trust between the two countries was reflected not only in the commercial area, but also in the political, diplomatic and cultural sectors. In summary, this unique approach strengthens national, regional and international security.

In its nearly 30 years of activity, ABACC has carried out about 3,000 safeguards inspections in nuclear facilities of both countries. During this period, the two countries provided around US\$150 million to support ABACC. Currently, ABACC verifies about 3500 Significant Quantities of nuclear material in 77 nuclear facilities in both countries. ABACC has a permanent staff of 12 technical officers (6 Argentineans and 6 Brazilians) and 10 administrative people. In addition, ABACC has 101 inspectors nominated by the countries, who are summoned for inspection missions. The inspection effort is in the order of 1000 inspectors-day, which means that, on average, three ABACC inspectors are daily involved in an inspection mission. The current budget of ABACC is US\$ 4.5 million, divided equally between the two countries.

The success of the ABACC's model was only possible with the continuous political and technical support that the two countries provided to ABACC. It should be noted that this support has been maintained over the last 30 years throughout six Argentinean administrations and six Brazilian administrations with different political orientations. That reflects the long-standing commitment of the countries to non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The Bilateral Agreement and, in particular, the implementation of the Common System, paved the way to the negotiation and entry into force of a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA. In fact, the “Agreement between the Republic of Argentina, the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards for the Application of Safeguards” was signed as early as in December 1991 and entered into force in March 1994. It is worth noting that in applying their respective safeguards, ABACC and the IAEA should each reach independent conclusions and, at same time, avoid duplication of activities. This requires continuous coordination of activities between the two organizations.

In conclusion, the bilateral arrangement between Argentina and Brazil, which ABACC and its safeguards system represent, is a relevant contribution to the nuclear non-proliferation regime at regional and international levels. The existence of ABACC within the context of the Tlatelolco Nuclear Weapons Free Zone reinforces the nuclear non-proliferation architecture of a region of peace. The process and the lessons learnt from this experience may serve as an inspiration for other regions in the world.

Furthermore, the permanent and unequivocal commitment of Argentina and Brazil with relevant nuclear activities to the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy and the successful implementation of the safeguards system that ABACC administers serve to promote the cooperation in the nuclear field and beyond this technology and the strengthening of ties of friendship and mutual confidence. It generates trust between the two nations that is a key element to strengthen national, regional and international security.