
Conference on Disarmament

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Letter dated 8 August 2011 from the Permanent Representatives of Argentina and Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament addressed to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament transmitting an article jointly authored by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of those countries concerning the twentieth anniversary of the Agreement between Argentina and Brazil for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy

We have the honour to transmit herewith an article jointly authored by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina, Héctor Timerman, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Antonio Patriota, on the work done by the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) over the past 20 years. We would be grateful if the article could be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Signed:) **Alberto J. Dumont**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Argentina
to the Conference on Disarmament

(Signed:) **Akio Suda**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Brazil
to the Conference on Disarmament

Twenty years of strategic cooperation in the field of nuclear energy

by Héctor Timerman and Antonio Patriota*

The date of 18 July marks the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Agreement between Argentina and Brazil for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy.

Under this agreement, Argentina and Brazil jointly consented to abstain from developing, possessing or using nuclear weapons; affirmed their unequivocal commitment to the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy; and established the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) for the purpose of monitoring the commitments entered into.

Five months later, they signed a quadripartite agreement with ABACC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the application of comprehensive safeguards in all their nuclear facilities.

In political terms, this substantially changed the nature of our bilateral relations.

The nuclear issue ceased to be a source of possible suspicion, becoming instead a central pillar of trust and cooperation in the strategic relations between these two South American States as a result of a process of negotiation and the establishment of a legal structure that are without precedent in any other region.

Most countries in the world have adopted international commitments and controls in the nuclear field by signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We, however, began this process by first signing a bilateral agreement and a quadripartite agreement, followed by the Tlatelolco Treaty (under which Latin America and the Caribbean became a nuclear-weapon-free zone), and then the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Brazil and Argentina were also among the first countries to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The establishment of ABACC was the culmination, in legal terms, of an effort to forge closer relations between the newly restored democracies of Argentina and Brazil which began with the Argentine-Brazilian Joint Declaration on Nuclear Policy, signed in Foz do Iguaçu in 1985. At the same time, it was the starting point for the consolidation of a strategic bilateral relationship in a key area of international security.

Within ABACC, which is an independent body, inspections of Argentine nuclear facilities are carried out by Brazilian inspectors, and inspections of Brazilian nuclear facilities are carried out by Argentine inspectors. This process has resulted in a high level of mutual trust between the two countries regarding the peaceful nature of their nuclear programmes.

Also of importance is the complete trust that the International Atomic Energy Agency has in the work of ABACC. The two bodies work independently, but in a complementary manner, seeking out synergies while avoiding duplication of efforts.

In keeping with this approach, we have adopted a joint position on the different issues in the nuclear debate. For us, it is clear that the international community should make nuclear disarmament a priority as part of its efforts to prevent proliferation and build a safer, more peaceful world that is free from the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

* Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Argentine Republic and the Federative Republic of Brazil.

The joint statements on nuclear cooperation made on 3 August 2010 and 31 January 2011 illustrate the breadth and depth of this relationship and confirm that Argentina and Brazil are committed to treading a common path.

These presidential statements illustrate the unique role played by ABACC in underpinning bilateral cooperation in the nuclear field and in building the mutual and international trust that ensures that all nuclear activities in Argentina and Brazil are monitored. At the same time, they call for ongoing efforts to improve and strengthen the work and objectives of ABACC.

In the year of its twentieth anniversary, the now consolidated ABACC has started to participate as an observer in the meetings of the IAEA Board of Governors, just as the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), for example, does.

Furthermore, in a historic coincidence, less than two weeks ago the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which has 46 participating Governments, established new requirements for the transfer of advanced nuclear technologies which, in an unprecedented step, recognize membership in ABACC as an alternative to an IAEA additional protocol.

The importance of the Argentine-Brazilian experience in promoting transparency and mutual trust in the nuclear field has also been acknowledged in various IAEA documents and Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons conference documents.

It therefore serves as an example and source of inspiration for other regions of the world, where the presence of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is still, unfortunately, a reality.

Celebrating the anniversary of ABACC is a way of celebrating Argentina's and Brazil's world view and strategic relationship.

It is thus also a celebration of our regional vocation for peace.
