

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and sixty-fifth plenary meeting

Held via videoconference on Tuesday, 9 March 2021, at 3 p.m. Central European Time

President: Mr. Gonalo de Barros Carvalho e Mello Mouro..... (Brazil)

The President: I now call to order the 1565th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Good afternoon to all. As previously announced, the plenary meeting today is held in the context of the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC).

I would like to propose that our order of business of this meeting be as follows. First, I will open the discussion with a brief overview. Thereafter, the Conference will hear presentations from three panellists: Ms. Elena Maceiras, Secretary of the Agency, Mr. Marco Marzo, Deputy Secretary, and Mr. Andreas Persbo, Research Director at the European Leadership Network.

Following the panellists' presentations, I intend to open the floor for a discussion on the substantive topic of today's meeting, and this meeting will then be closed by the Ambassador of Argentina to this Conference.

Distinguished delegates, it is my honour to open this thematic debate on the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, together with my colleague, Ambassador Federico Villegas, the Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations Office at Geneva. Our meeting this afternoon will be the outcome of a joint endeavour equally undertaken and successfully achieved by Brazil and Argentina.

The year 2021 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the creation of the Agency through the adoption of the Guadalajara Declaration, on the application of nuclear safeguards in our two countries. The adoption in 1994 of the Quadripartite Safeguards Agreement by Brazil, Argentina, ABACC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) ensured that the physical monitoring of nuclear activities in both Brazil and Argentina, as mandated by article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, is conducted by both agencies.

Brazil and Argentina decided to follow an unprecedented path by creating ABACC and putting all their nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Brazilian-Argentine Agency. This Agreement is the result of a historic and successful political process of integration and confidence-building by our two countries. The ultimate goal of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency is to ensure that no nuclear material is diverted or used in an inappropriate or unauthorized manner, in conformity with the purposes of the bilateral agreement that created the Agency.

Based on the principle of neighbours watching neighbours, the verification arrangement is supported by the Agency's independent status, advanced technical capabilities, and highly qualified personnel. Inspections are carried out jointly with the International Atomic Energy Agency, in application of full-scope safeguards.

The Brazilian-Argentine Agency performs inspections on a cross-national basis. Argentine inspectors carry out inspections in Brazil, and Brazilian inspectors carry out inspections in Argentina. Currently, there are 50 inspectors from each member State, all professionals from the nuclear safeguards field.

The main advantage of this system is that verification is performed directly by the interested party. In addition, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency can call in expert inspectors specialized in the type of installation to be inspected, which increases the effectiveness of the safeguards system.

The purpose of this meeting is not only to commemorate this milestone in the history of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency but also to provide an opportunity to share with other members of the Conference on Disarmament the wealth of experience and the lessons learned in the process of creating and operating the Agency, as well as the verification model that underpins it. We are well aware that history and geographical circumstances differ from one region to another. However, we believe that the Agency experience could be used as an inspiration for other countries and regions with a view to building confidence and improving peace and security at the bilateral, regional and international levels.

After these brief remarks, let me turn now to our three panellists for this afternoon's meeting: Ms. Elena Maceiras, Secretary of the Agency, Mr. Marco Marzo, Deputy Secretary, and Mr. Andreas Persbo, Research Director at the European Leadership Network.

The presentations will take up some fifteen minutes each and will be followed by a question-and-answer session. Ambassador Federico Villegas will deliver concluding remarks.

It is my pleasure now to introduce to you Ms. Elena Maceiras, Secretary of the Agency. Ms. Maceiras has more than 40 years of experience in nuclear activities. Since 1976, she has been part of various national and international bodies responsible for regulating the nuclear fuel cycle, including the Argentine Nuclear Regulatory Authority. She has represented Argentina on the Board of Governors and at the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in the Nuclear Suppliers Group and on the Brazil-Argentina Permanent Committee on Nuclear Policy. Since September 2018, she has held the highest position for Argentina in the Agency.

Ms. Maceiras (Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like to thank you, both personally and on behalf of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, for the invitation to participate in this meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, and I wish you and other delegates to the Conference every success in your work.

In the 1980s, Argentina and Brazil embarked on a process to build mutual trust and increase transparency and cooperation. It was a positive step taken by two countries with significant nuclear activities; it laid the foundation for the policy of non-proliferation in Latin America and led to the creation of a model entity, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials.

On 17 May 1980, the two countries signed a comprehensive cooperation agreement for the development and application of peaceful uses of nuclear energy, with a framework for action that would continue to be expanded over time. This agreement provided the basis needed for each country to be able to learn about the other's nuclear programme through exchanges of information and consultations, a process that several presidential declarations helped strengthen over the following years. In light of the progress that had been made in bilateral nuclear cooperation, Argentina and Brazil signed a bilateral agreement for the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy in Guadalajara, Mexico, on 18 July 1991. The agreement entered into force in December 1991, after it was ratified by the legislatures of both countries. It established a reciprocal monitoring system for nuclear material and facilities that was an innovation in the context of non-proliferation. There is no other system of this type anywhere else in the world.

Article 6 of the agreement provided for the creation of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, an intergovernmental organization whose mission is to verify and provide assurances that all nuclear material and facilities in Argentina and Brazil are used exclusively for peaceful purposes. Article 7 gives the Agency a very clear objective: to administer and implement the Common System of Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, a regional safeguards system. In addition, the agreement makes the Agency independent of both countries.

I would like to highlight the fact that, although the Agency was born out of a political process of regional integration, it is a technical body with clearly defined objectives and tasks. Consequently, under the agreement, the Agency has a relatively simple structure, consisting of a commission – the Agency's governing body – and a secretariat, its managing body. The Commission has four members, two of whom are appointed by the Government of Brazil and two by the Government of Argentina. In practice, each country sends one member from its national nuclear authority and one from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Commission sets the policy guidelines that steer the work of the secretariat, oversees the activities of the secretariat and ensures the proper functioning of the Common System. It is also responsible for bringing any anomalies that may arise as a result of the implementation of the Common System to the attention of the parties. The Commission usually meets at least three times a year.

The secretariat, for its part, is responsible for all the activities required to properly and effectively implement and administer the Common System and for periodic reporting on progress to the Commission. It must immediately report to the Commission any discrepancies that are detected on the part of either party during the evaluation of verification results. In carrying out its duties, the secretariat interacts regularly with the authorities of both Brazil

and Argentina and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The secretariat also manages the Agency's human and financial resources and other assets. In this capacity, it is responsible for preparing the annual plan of work and budget for the Commission's approval.

The secretariat is led by two secretaries, one of each nationality, who usually alternate as head of the Agency. From the outset, it was decided that there would be four technical departments, structured around the key areas for verification: planning and evaluation; operations, the department in charge of inspections; nuclear material accounting; and technical support. Each technical department is made up of and led by one Argentine and one Brazilian official. Within this framework, the main duties of the secretariat's various departments are to set safeguards criteria and targets; develop the safeguards approach to be taken at each nuclear facility; analyse and process the design and nuclear material accounting information provided by the two countries; manage the verification regime for this information, including by establishing procedures and measures for the acquisition, use and maintenance of all technical equipment required for activities in the field; and, above all, evaluate the results and draw conclusions as to each party's compliance with the agreement.

The institutional relations and financial administration departments are currently headed by a Brazilian and an Argentine, respectively, and their missions are, of course, to provide the relevant support in managing the Agency's institutional relationships and image and in managing its human and financial resources.

I would like to point out that the structure of the secretariat and the number of officials in it have not changed over the past 30 years and have proved highly effective in meeting the specific technical objectives arising from the bilateral agreement signed in 1991. In addition, the Agency's annual budget, provided in equal parts by the two countries, has not changed substantially in recent years, despite the increases in the significant quantities of nuclear material in the Common System, because the management of financial and human resources has been refined with experience and become more efficient.

One of the Agency's strengths – perhaps the most important – is the highly qualified human capital that both countries have placed at its service. Specifically, Agency officials come from the senior ranks of the nuclear and safeguards sectors of both countries and have lengthy experience in their thematic areas. As a regional safeguards system, the Agency uses a system of cross-inspections where Brazilian inspectors inspect Argentine facilities and vice versa. The annual inspection plan is prepared on the basis of the Agency's safeguards targets and objectives, using the operational and design information provided by both countries. This plan is coordinated with IAEA, as provided for in the Quadripartite Agreement.

The Brazilian-Argentine Agency currently has some 45 inspectors per country, who also come from the nuclear and safeguards sectors. While these inspectors are not permanent members of the secretariat, they are considered officials for the duration of the safeguards missions for which they are brought in and enjoy the same privileges and immunities as permanent officials. Maintaining and increasing our technical capacity is one of our priorities. For that and other reasons, we engage in ongoing efforts both to train inspectors and to analyse new technologies that may increase the efficiency and effectiveness of verification. The team of inspectors has been carrying out verification missions in Argentina and Brazil on an almost daily basis, enabling the Agency to reach sound, independent technical conclusions.

It should be stressed that, during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Agency has been faced with the challenge of continuing to achieve its objectives under its mandate, despite the situation, while complying with the prevention measures adopted by the two countries, with the health of Agency staff being a priority for the secretariat during the pandemic. We have therefore taken the necessary measures and precautions to ensure the continuity of the operations that can, to an extent, be carried out from home offices.

We are grateful for the assistance provided by the national authorities and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both countries during this difficult period and can proudly say that in 2020 and so far in 2021 we have kept to the planned inspection schedule and have carried out the planned verification activities at facilities. We have thus been able to properly implement the safeguards by applying the relevant criteria, complying with our targets and,

above all, maintaining knowledge continuity with respect to nuclear material in Argentina and Brazil.

There has been extensive coordination and cooperation with IAEA in this context. Both countries are still planning to expand their nuclear activities. Looking ahead, the increase in nuclear material activities and inventories in Argentina and Brazil will represent a challenge for the Agency. We are now adopting a forward-looking approach and are taking steps that will allow us to face this increase with the responsiveness and technical excellence that have characterized the Agency.

I would like to point out once again that, beyond providing the human and financial resources required by the Agency to function, the two countries must at all times ensure its institutional autonomy. The independence of the Agency's operations vis-à-vis both countries is key to the system's credibility.

On 13 December 1991, the Agency, Argentina, Brazil and IAEA signed a comprehensive safeguards agreement, referred to as the Quadripartite Agreement, which entered into force in March 1994. This agreement contains clear provisions regarding coordination and cooperation between IAEA and the Agency and specifically provides that the two agencies must cooperate and minimize the duplication of efforts while also reaching conclusions independently. The positive results that have come out of the coordination of the two agencies' activities over the past 30 years are indicative of their considerable mutual understanding and cooperation. Under this framework for cooperation, the Agency is firmly committed to the continued promotion of mechanisms and means that allow IAEA safeguards to make full use of the Agency's findings and conclusions, as provided for in the Quadripartite Safeguards Agreement and as discussed at the Non-Proliferation Treaty review conferences.

In the area of non-proliferation, it should be noted that the Latin America and Caribbean region was a pioneer in placing limits on the nuclear arms race. The 1967 Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco) fostered the creation of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region of the world. The States of Latin America and the Caribbean are parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and members of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Brazilian-Argentine Agency, as a regional system, can be seen as part of the network of international instruments and organizations, each of which has distinctive features and specific functions but plays an important role in guaranteeing the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy in our region.

The 1991 bilateral agreement between Argentina and Brazil reflects the principles of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and, in May 1993, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean signed an agreement establishing a framework for regular consultations, harmonization of efforts, exchanges of information and scientific and technological support activities – a framework for a relationship that we hope to continue deepening in the future.

This year the Brazilian-Argentine Agency is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary. Over these 30 years, we have established significant international credibility in the effective and efficient verification of the nuclear activities of Argentina and Brazil, largely owing to continued political commitment and the technical and financial support provided by the two countries and, I repeat, the Agency's independence in carrying out its work and in its verification activities.

As I said at the beginning, the Agency was the fruit of a deep and lasting relationship between Argentina and Brazil that had been built on the basis of mutual trust. While our objective is to implement safeguards, our day-to-day efforts and the experience accumulated by the Agency over the past 30 years also continue to foster confidence-building and the rapprochement between the two countries; they are also an important factor in the two countries' increasingly cooperative approach to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In addition, the results of 30 years of verification activities demonstrate to the international community that Argentina and Brazil are in full compliance with their obligations under the bilateral agreement and, consequently, that the two countries are clearly and unquestionably committed to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Finally, we hope that the successful implementation of model regional systems such as the one established under the bilateral agreement will serve as an inspiration to other regions of the world and at the upcoming deliberations on the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Agency, which serves as an example, is proof that cooperation, dialogue and mutual respect between countries contribute decisively to regional and international security and a more peaceful world. Thank you very much for your attention.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ms. Maceiras, for your statement and your presentation of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and its work.

(*spoke in English*)

It is my pleasure now to introduce Mr. Marco Marzo, who is Secretary of the Agency for Brazil. Mr. Marzo, has over 35 years' experience in nuclear safeguards and security and has acted as consultant for the International Atomic Energy Agency and other international organizations on several occasions.

From May 2008 to August 2014, he was Director of the Division of Operations of Department of Safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that is responsible for the implementation of safeguards in Asia. From 1992 to 2006, before joining IAEA, he was co-founder and First Senior Officer for Planning and Evaluation of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. As Director of the Safeguards Division at the Brazilian National Nuclear Energy Commission, Mr. Marzo was responsible for nuclear safeguards and physical protection of Brazilian nuclear facilities from 1983 to 1992. He led the Brazilian technical delegation in the negotiation of the bilateral safeguards agreement with Argentina. Mr. Marzo is presently Secretary of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency.

Prior to his appointment, from September 2014 to June 2016, he was a research professor and Associate Director of the Integrated Nuclear Security and Safeguards Laboratory at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. It is my pleasure, then, to give the floor to Mr. Marco Marzo.

Mr. Marzo (Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials): Thank you, Mr. President. I am very honoured and pleased to attend this meeting. I would like to thank you very much for organizing it to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC). My objective here is to provide more details on the Agency's structure and operational activities.

Mr. President, before we start talking about the structure of the Agency, I would like to provide a brief overview of the background and the developments that led to its creation.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the domestic nuclear programmes of the two countries were not under international safeguards – only nuclear materials and nuclear facilities transferred from abroad were under such safeguards. The national programmes were not. And we had developments in sensitive nuclear areas: uranium enrichment in Argentina in 1983 and in Brazil in 1987. Both countries had processing programmes. And both countries were involved in an international nuclear race. That was the background at the time.

The first agreement between Brazil and Argentina on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy was reached in 1980. And this agreement was close to the resolution in 1979 of the controversy over the utilization of water resources of the River Plate basin. This diplomatic resolution allowed the start of the rapprochement between Brazil and Argentina in the nuclear area.

The Permanent Committee on Nuclear Policy was formed in 1985. Not only diplomats but also representatives of industry and the technical and the scientific sectors participated in the work of the Committee. It was thus a committee with a very broad scope.

I would like to emphasize that the 1983 election of President Alfonsín in Argentina and the 1985 election of President Sarney in Brazil represented the return to democracy of both countries. This created a new stimulus for the rapprochement of the two countries.

In the mid-1980s, a confidence-building process started in both countries: technical visits to nuclear facilities not under international safeguards between 1987 and 1990; the formation of several working groups in different nuclear sectors, such as radiological protection, nuclear engineering and science of materials and even safeguards. That was the start of a very good approach by scientists and technicians from the two countries.

As Ms. Maceiras already said, many bilateral declarations on the use of nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purpose have been made at the levels of the Heads of State, including in Foz do Iguaçu (1985), Brasília (1986), Viedma (1987), Iperó (1988) and Ezeiza (1990).

Here, I would like to highlight the very important presidential visits. In July 1987, President Sarney made a visit to the diffusion enrichment plant in Pilcaniyeu, which was, at the time, a secret enrichment plant in Argentina. This was not only a political visit. Just after that visit, in August 1987, a Brazilian technical delegation paid a visit to this facility and had the opportunity to examine all aspects of this enrichment plant. The next year, in April 1988, President Alfonsín of Argentina visited the centrifuge enrichment plant in Aramar in Brazil, a visit that was also followed by visits from technical delegations.

All these very relevant developments led to the signature of the Agreement between Argentina and Brazil for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy – which we call the bilateral agreement – in July 1991 in Guadalajara, Mexico. In this picture, you can see President Menem and President Collor signing the agreement in Guadalajara. With this Agreement, the countries undertook to use nuclear materials and facilities exclusively for peaceful purposes. The Agreement created the Agency to administer the Common System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. And note that the Agreement was ratified less than five months later, on 12 December 1991. This fast-track approval reflects the two countries' consensus on the ratification of the Agreement.

The mission of the Agency is to verify that all nuclear materials and all nuclear activities are exclusively for peaceful purposes. In order to accomplish that mission, the Agency has to apply the Common System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, which is actually a safeguards document. This Common System contemplates the rights and obligations of nuclear facility operators, nuclear authorities and the bilateral system. This Common System thus goes further than a mere safeguards document.

The Agency started its operational activities in April 1992. You can see in this picture former Minister for Foreign Affairs Guido di Tella and Ambassador Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was later the Brazilian President, inaugurating the Agency headquarters.

I consider this a history of success. The Southern Common Market, which was created in 1993, a year later, gave the two countries the opportunity to enhance their relationship in several areas: economic, political, and cultural. Let me emphasize that the Brazilian-Argentine Agency is still the only official agency for which both countries are responsible.

I would note that the volume of trade between Brazil and Argentina in 1991 was US\$ 1.5 billion. Now, despite economic crises – sometimes in one country, sometimes in the other – the value of that trade has gone from US\$ 1.5 billion to US\$ 30 billion. Brazil is presently the main trading partner of Argentina, and Argentina is the third-largest trading partner of Brazil. Before the pandemic, 3 million Argentines a year visited Brazil, and 1 million Brazilians visited Argentina.

In sum, mutual confidence – the two countries' trust in one another – enhances national, regional and international security. This bilateral model is thus a very relevant element of the non-proliferation regime.

Mr. President, the Commission of the Agency – that is, its Board of Directors – has two Argentine representatives and two Brazilian representatives. The secretariat of the Agency has two secretaries. Ms. Maceiras is presently the Argentine Secretary, and I am the Brazilian Secretary. We alternate every year as Secretary and Deputy Secretary. This year Ms. Maceiras is Secretary, and I am Deputy Secretary.

In every technical section – planning and evaluation, operations, accounting, and technical support – we always have one Argentine and one Brazilian officer. The financial administration section has an Argentine officer, while the officer responsible for institutional

relations is presently Brazilian. In the inspectorate, there is a total of 45 to 50 inspectors, who are not permanent staff members, from the two countries.

In view of yesterday's celebration of International Woman's Day, let me say that I am very proud to say that 42 per cent of our technical officers are women and that 40 per cent of our general staff members are women. The two senior planning and evaluation officers, the Secretary and the financial administration and institutional relations officers are women. We are very proud of this situation, but of course we have room to improve it even more.

The Agency is unique in not having a permanent inspectorate. All the inspections in Brazil are performed by Argentine inspectors and vice versa. Each country appoints the inspectors for approval by the Commission. That means the inspectors are selected by the countries, not by the Agency secretariat. The Commission simply approves these appointments. But the secretariat selects inspectors with the expertise best suited for a given inspection mission or a given facility. This enhances the effectiveness of our activities.

Another point I would like to highlight is that Agency inspectors perform their activities for their country. This creates a great sense of responsibility. It is not only professional work. The inspectors are working for their country.

I would like to emphasize that this model is very straightforward. When we have a problem or an anomaly, we can resolve it in a very straightforward and fast manner. Sometimes, in a day or two, we solve the problem and do not need to spend months resolving an anomaly or an issue in our area.

Now I would like to present an updated list of nuclear facilities. The two countries have 75 facilities under safeguards, 11 conversion/fuel fabrication plants, 5 uranium enrichment plants, 8 power reactors, 13 research reactors, critical units and subcritical units, and 38 other facilities such as research and development facilities and storage facilities.

The pictures show some of the more relevant facilities. The two nuclear power plants that can be seen are Atucha in Argentina and Embalse, also in Argentina. There is also a picture of the diffusion enrichment plant Pilcaniyeu in Argentina. The nuclear power plants Angra I and Angra II in Brazil are also shown on the slide. The enrichment plant is a pilot plant. It is an Indústrias Nucleares do Brasil commercial enrichment plant in Brazil.

Now I would like to provide some figures on the Agency's activities. The nuclear material under safeguards went from 1,300 significant quantities in 1994 to 3,900 significant quantities today. That means three times more. One significant quantity is approximately the amount of nuclear material necessary to manufacture one elementary nuclear explosive device.

The Agency thus oversees 3,900 significant quantities. Over the past 30 years, we have performed approximately 3,200 inspections including 250 unannounced inspections. On average, we perform 120 inspections annually, with approximately 1,000 inspector days a year.

In 2020, despite all the logistical problems associated with the pandemic, we performed 134 inspections in the two countries. The Agency's budget for 2021 is about US\$ 4.5 million.

Our verification activities are normal international safeguards activities and are based on accountancy measures. That means the measurement of nuclear material and containment and surveillance as complementary measures.

From the beginning, the Agency has used the latest international standard to measure amounts of nuclear material – basically, non-destructive measurement systems. Here are examples of two kinds of device for measuring nuclear material. Samples are collected during the inspections and transferred to our analytical laboratories in order to analyse the amount of fissile uranium in the samples.

All nuclear material samples collected in Brazil are analysed by Argentine laboratories. And all samples collected in Argentina are analysed in Brazilian laboratories. The laboratories do not belong to the Agency. They belong to the national authorities, which provide the service to the Agency.

The Agency has also made great efforts to use – and invested heavily in – latest-generation containment and surveillance systems. And we can see in the picture such a surveillance system. On the left is the next-generation surveillance system. On the right, a very modern electronic seal and in the middle an Agency inspector installing a surveillance system at a nuclear material storage facility.

As Ms. Maceiras noted, the Quadripartite Safeguards Agreement was signed in December 1991 and ratified in March 1994. ABACC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are to be guided by the following principles: they need to reach independent conclusions; they need to coordinate their activities as much as possible to avoid the unnecessary duplication of ABACC safeguards; ABACC and IAEA should work jointly according to compatible safeguards criteria of the two organizations.

The cooperation between ABACC and IAEA over the 25 years of the existence of the Quadripartite Agreement has been excellent, in particular the coordination of activities at the operational level. We agreed on joint inspection procedures and on the safeguards approach to specific facilities, in particular sensitive facilities. We coordinate on equipment procurement and have about 40 procedures for common use of equipment. That means that one agency can use the equipment owned by the other agency. We use the same equipment.

To provide examples of the cooperation between the two agencies, I will summarize three different moments. The first picture is of the visit of IAEA Director General Hans Blix in 1997, the second is of the visit of IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei in 2007 and the third is of the visit of IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano in 2016.

Of course, there is always room for improvement in both organizations, but I think this demonstrates good cooperation between the two organizations.

I will conclude my presentation, hoping questions have been answered. Thank you for your attention and for this opportunity.

The President: I thank Mr. Marzo very much for his very clear description of the origins and objectives of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

It is my pleasure now to introduce to you Mr. Andreas Persbo. Mr. Persbo is this research director at the European Leadership Network. He is the author of more than 40 papers and reports. His research responsibilities at the Network cover the full spectrum of European security matters. His specific interests are relations between the Russian Federation and the West, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as ways to regulate and control the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction.

Before joining the European Leadership Network, Mr. Persbo served as the executive director of the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre, where he had previously served as a research and senior researcher with an original focus on the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Asia. He was one of the founding members of a joint initiative by the United Kingdom and Norway on verified warhead dismantlement.

I give the floor, then, to Mr. Persbo.

Mr. Persbo (European Leadership Network): Thank you, Mr. President. Ladies and gentlemen, it is truly a pleasure to “be here” today and “see” so many dear friends in the audience as well. You know who you are.

I was surprised and honoured when Brazil extended this invitation for me to speak today. I am not Argentine or Brazilian, of course, and I have never worked with the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC).

Indeed, I first came across the acronym when I was a young researcher at the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC) simply because the Agency sent us its annual reports. I have to admit that, as a young person back in the early 2000s, I had no idea what ABACC was. I just saw the reports. I was preoccupied with issues relating to Iran. Of course, it started back then, and other safeguards mattered, and I really did not have time to find out more about what this mysterious organization was.

Of course, VERTIC itself had covered ABACC issues for a long time. The Centre covered its birth. For instance, in 1992, Owen Greene, who still serves on VERTIC's board, wrote: "The intention is that ABACC will act as a regional safeguards agency, intermediary between the IAEA and the States involved." And he noted the prospect perhaps of its becoming a regional agency: "Chile and Uruguay have expressed interest in joining this new arrangement."

Back then, Western observers mostly noted the value of ABACC as part of the process of perhaps bringing Latin America under full-scope safeguards. I think this perspective was and perhaps still is short-sighted. We have heard presentations now giving us some more information as to why that might be.

I think it is hard to underestimate, for instance, the political will that stood behind the concept of, as Mr. Marzo said, neighbour watching neighbour. It is also perhaps the case that ABACC provided the two countries the necessary security grounds for allowing the Treaty of Tlatelolco to enter into force.

It is worth noting that Argentina and Brazil waived the conditions for the Treaty's entry into force only after ABACC was functioning, and there might be perhaps lessons here for future instruments that we are looking at, such as a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in terms of a regional inspectorate.

But I am getting ahead of myself a little bit. Personally, I got to know ABACC better in the late 2010s, when I engaged in a series of consultations on multilateral disarmament verification. People associated with the Agency were present at some workshops we held in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires. Their contributions were valuable, and I have to say that when you sit in in the two countries and listen to these experiences, that is really when you start to understand how significant this instrument has been for both Argentina and Brazil. And I think this national and regional context is well worth remembering and celebrating in its own right.

The Agency came about, as we heard, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and it has to be said that there is still a conversation among historians about how exactly this idea came about. There are theories that the idea was planted by the North Americans with a prominent United States senator visiting the region in the late 1970s.

Did it in fact start with a conversation between the non-democratic pasts of the two countries or was it an outcome of the democratization of the two countries itself?

We tend to look at the history of ABACC as a celebration of the latter, and perhaps that is the important part. Why it came about might not be as important as how it came about. To my mind, ABACC is indeed a celebration of friendly and peaceful relations in Latin America. And while the genesis of the framework can probably be found in the 1970s, it is associated with the partnership that blossomed after both countries became democratic. Mr. Marzo gave you some very specific figures in terms of trade relations and so on.

Of course, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) strengthened and built on these economic ties, while ABACC reinforced strategic links. And since ABACC preceded MERCOSUR, some would say, perhaps not without cause, that the former helped bring the latter into being.

And since that time, Argentina and Brazil have traditionally had very strong relations. In recent years, despite ups and downs, they have been as strong as ever.

Again, I think it is important to recognize the role that ABACC had to play in this. And this is perhaps the most significant benefit of this arrangement. It kept two potential rivals – perhaps the rivalry had been overplayed in the literature, but they were two potential rivals indeed – in step with each other and, like the European Coal and Steel Community, it was part of a puzzle that kept its continent relatively safe and now prosperous.

But ABACC is also, I would argue, of global importance. We have now entered the seventy-sixth year of the atomic age. And it has been only 82 years since Lise Meitner discovered theoretically that the atom could be split.

Since those days, nine States have crossed the threshold, as we know, and become nuclear-armed. Many more, certainly including Argentina and Brazil, could have joined the ranks of those nine.

Even as late as the early 1990s, joining a non-proliferation pact was not a foregone conclusion. Today, we seem to think it is, but back then it really was not. It is easy to forget that the Agency was formed a full year before China and France acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – things we take for granted today.

During this time, as we heard, the Agency brought two advanced fuel cycles under safeguards. That in itself was a notable achievement. And the organization is now entering its third decade, leaving its youth behind. It is now entering a new age of maturity and, I would argue, a new age of opportunity.

These are dark days. The pandemic recently turned one year old, and the loss of lives in the last year has been staggering. It is too early to say what the loss in livelihoods might be once the virus loosens its grip, but it is also likely to be grave. But despite these dark days, there are still things to look forward to and celebrate. And it seems as if when we do so that our merriments take on a little bit more shine.

There is plenty to be joyful about when it comes to the Agency, and therefore it is perhaps suitable that this organization, with its relatively small budget and modest size, celebrates its pearl anniversary during these, our pandemic years. Because I still think it holds promise of better days ahead.

Recall that in 2012, the Agency and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), the regional safeguards authority here in Europe, engaged in a cooperation project to strengthen safeguards capabilities, in effect transferring two technologies owned by the European Union's Joint Research Centre to the Agency. I know, anecdotally, that this cooperation has been valued, and I do hope that it continues. If it continues, it should be built upon, because there is no reason for the world's two regional safeguard systems not to work together. I think this is a natural bridge between the nuclear communities in Europe and in South America. And this bridge should be made more robust. We should work towards strengthening these ties.

Moreover, and I make this suggestion in the best of faith and without any intention to insult my gracious host, I think, naive though I may be, that it is time for Argentina and Brazil to update their agreement somewhat. I know that both countries have insisted on an implicit reference to the Agency as a temporary alternative to the additional protocol to the comprehensive safeguards agreement, and I expect this to be raised yet again at the upcoming NPT Review Conference.

That is fair enough, I would say, but I nevertheless think that Argentina and Brazil can go further together and in consultation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. It would be a significant gesture of goodwill if ABACC could work towards moving its safeguards arrangements closer to the additional protocol. It does not need to adopt the protocol, but it needs to update its own procedures, while it works towards the final adoption of the additional protocol, which is stated as an ultimate outcome. This work would be very welcome in the West and would create a very good atmosphere in the forthcoming NPT Review Conference – for instance – and beyond.

Finally, I think ABACC should form the nucleus of a new area of cooperation with Latin America. As I am the research director of the European Leadership Network, I am obviously somewhat biased: an area of cooperation between Europe and Latin America. But, of course, it could also be the nucleus and centre point of cooperation between Latin America and Asia. And as I said, I was brought to Latin America under a project to explore the potential of establishing hubs devoted to the research and development of disarmament verification.

This is the context in which I travelled south to Argentina and Brazil and spoke to representatives of the two countries and indeed of ABACC. It is my firm belief that there is a vast amount of knowledge and certainly a significant amount of intellectual firepower hiding inside ABACC. And I would like – love, in fact – to see that both exposed and realized and applied to future challenges facing our own nuclear community.

Having said that and, I hope, keeping well within my 15 minutes, I would conclude by saying happy birthday to you, ABACC, on your thirtieth when summer comes. Mr. President, thank you for giving me the floor.

The President: I thank Mr. Persbo very much for this testimony of and appraisal of the work of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency and its relevance to enhancing national, regional and international security as far as nuclear activities are concerned.

I will now open the floor to any delegation wishing to speak on this topic. I have the pleasure to give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. Chaudhary (Pakistan): Thank you very much for giving me the floor, but I am not the Ambassador; anyhow, we have listened very carefully to these very useful presentations, and I would like to thank the panellists for sharing this useful and important information on this very useful Argentine and Brazilian mechanism.

I actually have a small question – small yet important – specifically with regard to the accounting and verification of fissile material, which, of course, entails a huge flow of information between the authorities concerned. Exchanging information seems by definition to be quite a difficult and challenging issue, but as Argentina and Brazil, through the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, have shown, they have been managing and dealing with this matter for three decades now.

I would thus greatly appreciate it if the panellists could share their experience of how the information, specifically with regard to the accounting and verification of fissile material, is exchanged. Thank you.

The President: I thank the delegate of Pakistan very much for his interest and will give the floor either to the Brazilian or to the Argentine Secretary. Ms. Maceiras, you have the floor.

Ms. Maceiras (Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials) (*spoke in Spanish*): In response to the delegate, first, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials was, as we always say, the outcome of a process of building mutual trust. In practical terms, that means that, before the Agency was created, there had been an awareness of the nuclear plans, and negotiations had been held on what information was going to be shared, how it was going to be shared and how it was going to be verified.

The bilateral agreement signed by Brazil and Argentina in 1991 was the end product of those talks. With respect to the information on nuclear facilities and material that the two countries must provide to the Agency and update on a monthly basis, the channels by which the Agency receives this information and the means used by the Agency to send the information to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the agreement is very clear.

Information is received in a manner much as it is under any comprehensive safeguards agreement – facilities information, with a list of facilities, including their design and purpose; the amount of nuclear material, listed by physical form and by chemical form; and a record-keeping system where this inventory is updated on a monthly basis.

The agreement clearly indicates the information that is to be provided. The Agency neither asks for that information each month nor considers asking for different information. As Mr. Marzo said, if there is an anomaly or something must be clarified, the Agency can, of course, ask the State party in question to provide additional information. However, the provisions of the agreement on information and the relevant channels are generally quite clear. The Agency does not request more information from the countries than that required to implement the bilateral agreement. Perhaps Mr. Marzo would like to add something.

The President: Thank you, Ms. Maceiras. I give the floor to Mr. Marzo.

Mr. Marzo (Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials): I think Ms. Maceiras's answer was very clear. The representative of Pakistan asked about verification. Let me say that during the inspections, our inspectors verify the material that is declared. They first audit records; they compare the records with the reports the State sent to the Agency and then verify the nuclear material, as I said, for gross, partial

and bias defects using non-destructive measurements and laboratory analysis. We use containment and surveillance to maintain continuity of knowledge. I think this answers your question. Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Mr. Marzo. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Egypt.

Mr. Gamaleldin (Egypt): Mr. President, allow me to start by thanking you and your team for convening this meeting and to thank the panellists, Ms. Maceiras and Mr. Marzo of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and Mr. Persbo of the European Leadership Network, for their very insightful and stimulating presentations.

I would like to congratulate Brazil and Argentina on the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Agency and to make a few remarks. The very existence of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency is testament that even in times of mistrust and uncertainty, bridges can be built, obstacles can be overcome and great results can be achieved.

If the concerned parties demonstrate the required political will, it also proves without any doubt that international peace and security have not been and will not be achieved through policies of deterrence and arms races. Efforts on disarmament and arms control, particularly with regard to weapons of mass destruction, should not be contingent upon the attainment of ideal political and security conditions.

Egypt strongly believes that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is one of the most important steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons. It is of great significance to pushing forward nuclear disarmament, preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons and promoting regional and world peace and security.

The live examples of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and Brazilian-Argentine Agency prove that this can and should be replicated in other regions. In recent years, the Middle East has witnessed serious and escalating developments in relation to both its security and its political situation. This requires all States in the region and the world to collaboratively deal with these challenges and the threats they pose to regional and international security with urgency and resolve.

The establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East remains a top priority on the list of necessary steps to maintain the security of the region and the safety of its peoples.

Egypt remains at the forefront of States calling for the realization of this goal and is working in a concrete manner to achieve it out of its conviction that the path to peace and security in the Middle East must be based on the concept of collective security rather than the concept of selective security. That conceptual approach will be mutually beneficial to all States in the region.

The question of the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East has gradually and justifiably taken its place at the forefront of issues in all disarmament forums, and especially at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences. Considering the inseparable linkage between the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995 and the resolution on the Middle East aiming to break the deadlock that has been persisting for decades, Egypt supported the efforts of the Arab Group that put forth a resolution to the General Assembly that called on the United Nations Secretary-General to convene a conference to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. In 2019, the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction successfully convened. The deliberations of the participating States confirmed their serious and sincere commitment to work towards achieving the goal of the Conference and the establishment of the Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

The States participating in the Conference issued a political declaration confirming their unwavering support for this process and reiterated their readiness to work with all States invited to this process at its next session. During the intersessional period, States participating in the Conference organized two workshops in July 2020 and February 2021 to discuss the

different experiences of other nuclear-weapon-free zones and lessons that can be learned from treaties like the Treaty of Pelindaba, the Treaty of Tlatelolco and others. Discussions alluded to success stories like Brazilian-Argentine Agency and how such arrangements could be useful in the context of the Middle East.

Egypt believes that this consensus-based process could significantly contribute to strengthening the international nuclear disarmament regime and accelerate reaching a nuclear-weapon-free world. We look forward to the support of the international community for this process as its participants prepare for its second session in November 2021. We hope that our discussion today and the example that Brazilian-Argentine Agency sets will inspire States in the Middle East region to follow similar steps. Once again, thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to discuss this important topic today.

The President: I thank you very much, Ambassador, for your attentive and kind considerations with regard to the international importance of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials in enhancing international, national and regional security as far as nuclear activities are concerned. I now give the floor to the delegate of Italy.

Mr. Francese (Italy) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would like to begin this statement by also congratulating the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials on its thirtieth anniversary and Argentina and Brazil on this important success. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, and your team not only for all the work that you are doing to build consensus around the draft decision on the work of the Conference on Disarmament but also for these initiatives and for having organized a very interesting discussion that can, in the opinion of my delegation, make a practical contribution to the work of the Conference.

My two questions are directed to Ms. Maceiras, but we would obviously also be grateful for the views of the other panellists, whom I would like to thank.

The first question has to do with the collaboration between the Agency and other countries in Latin America. I would be interested in hearing more about the type of contact that the Agency has had with other countries in the region over the past 30 years, especially since the framework for collaboration between the Agency and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean was put in place in 1993. In particular, I would like to know whether any country in the region – a reference was made to Uruguay and Chile – has approached the Agency to express interest in technical collaboration or, perhaps, an expansion of the Agency's membership. I would be interested in finding out a little more about the Agency's experiences in this regard.

Second, it was also mentioned that the Agency came out of a confidence-building process and, at the same time, is also a tool to help further increase transparency and trust. I would be interested in hearing from the panellists what, in their view, would be the most important piece of advice, from a technical or institutional perspective, to give to countries or regions where this process has not yet taken place. Obviously, inspections and verifications are the final and most important outcome. However, perhaps there are technical steps that can be taken to help strengthen this type of process. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate of Italy for his kind words for this presidency and for his interest in the work of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. I give the floor to Ms. Maceiras to respond.

Ms. Maceiras (Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would also like to thank the delegations that have congratulated the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. Regarding the first question, the Agency is a binational organization involving Argentina and Brazil. The inclusion of other Latin American countries would have to be the outcome of a political process. The secretariat cannot undertake such a political process; it would have to be undertaken by the Commission and the countries.

Of course, if the Agency expanded to include other countries or expanded its objective, as was mentioned earlier, the secretariat would implement those expansions. It has the

technical capacity to support the Commission. However, the secretariat is a technical body. Any policy steps have to be taken by the countries, through the Agency's governing body – the Commission – or other bodies.

The Agency cooperates with technical organizations more than with countries. It does cooperate, in particular, with the two constituent countries, Argentina and Brazil. The Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean has periodically made reports to the Brazilian-Argentine Agency, and we hope to work more closely with that organization in the future. Cooperation with other Latin American countries is a bit more problematic because they do not have access to the Agency's information.

With respect to the question regarding technical advice, as Mr. Marzo has explained, before the negotiation of the bilateral agreement, there had been technical consultations, facility visits, exchanges of information among scientists and conferences. One way to begin promoting transparency around nuclear plans is perhaps to start opening up some sensitive facilities, hosting conferences or holding meetings with technical specialists and scientists in order to be able to decide what to include in the monitoring system and how to monitor it. Perhaps Mr. Marzo would like to say more on this topic.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): If you would like it, Mr. Marzo, you have the floor.

Mr. Marzo (Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials): Thank you, Mr. President. My experience – and I have been privileged to participate since 1987 in the relationship process between the two countries as a Brazilian representative – says that we are often or always thinking very big. But we do not need to start so big in agreements and arrangements.

Many times we underestimate confidence-building measures that really work, like bringing together technicians, scientists from different countries, as Ms. Maceiras said, or conferences, congresses and technical visits. I think this is a way to start better relationships, but of course in the background there is always political will, a political decision to cooperate.

The participation of scientists and the technical community in this process, not only politicians or diplomats, is very important and very relevant. I would say in Argentina and Brazil, first of all, the technicians were involved in this kind of rapprochement. We should not underestimate this very important element of the process. Thank you.

The President: Thank you very much, Mr. Marzo. I wonder if Mr. Persbo would like to say something about this matter.

Mr. Persbo (European Leadership Network): Thank you, Mr. President. Just to echo and reinforce what both Ms. Maceiras and Mr. Marzo have been saying about the value of technical exchanges, and in answer to the question from my Italian friend and delegate, I think it is tempting to look at technical and institutional questions and think that the answer is somehow written out there in literature and that by studying the various safeguards and verification regimes we would come up with some sort of recipe that can be applied elsewhere.

The answer is not that simple. In many cases, you would need to start from the bottom up. As was said, between Argentina and Brazil, it started with a scientific exchange. From that perspective, it is quite encouraging that the international community as a whole has started to become more involved in scientific engagement, looking at broader nuclear disarmament verification issues. And I want to highlight the fact that both Argentina and Brazil, I believe, have been participating quite effectively in a United Nations group of governmental experts, highlighting the scientific experience derived principally from the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. It is my hope that this work continues.

I also want to flag the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in Geneva, which is presently undertaking – and this is a comment mostly directed to our friend from Egypt – a project looking at verification aspects of a potential zone free of weapons of mass destruction. But I do not think that they have reflected deeply on the role of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency, and maybe that is something our friends and colleagues at UNIDIR should be doing in future projects. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank you very much, Mr. Persbo. I now give the floor to the delegate of South Africa.

Mr. September (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. Let me start by thanking you for this wonderful presentation on this initiative.

It is a clear demonstration that where there is a political will, there is a way.

Now, when in South Africa gave up its nuclear weapons, it involved the International Atomic Energy Agency from the beginning, and it was done under the supervision of the Agency. South Africa realized that the most important aspect of this journey would be for the process to be credible.

When the dismantling process was completed, this was then also confirmed by the Agency. As I have said, the critical element of dismantling is a critical verification step.

The last panellist alluded to the role that Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials can play in nuclear disarmament verification. But, unfortunately, he is not part of that Agency, so I would like to hear from the two panellists who are. How do they see the role that their Agency can play in nuclear disarmament verification? I thank you.

The President: I thank the delegate of South Africa very much and give the floor to Ms. Maceiras.

Ms. Maceiras (Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials) (*spoke in Spanish*): The mandate of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials clearly does not cover disarmament. The Agency manages a comprehensive safeguards agreement, and its objective and mission fall within the sphere of non-proliferation. Although the Agency's mission might not seem to contribute to disarmament, the process of how the Agency came into being can be seen to contribute to it. Of course, if at some point the two countries consider it appropriate, under given circumstances, for the Agency to apply the extensive technical verification capabilities that they have given it directly in the field of disarmament, the Agency would take that on.

However, as Mr. Persbo said, the Agency is not a recipe. It is a part of a process, a process that could be inspirational and could be replicated in other regions. I think that that is the biggest contribution. Perhaps Mr. Marzo or Mr. Persbo would like to add something.

The President: Mr. Marzo, you have the floor.

Mr. Marzo (Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials): Thank you, Mr. President. I think Ms. Maceiras's answer is completely correct. It is up to the two countries, through the Agency's Commission, to make political decisions. Anyway, I would like to emphasize that the Agency has the capabilities, the equipment and the tools to verify nuclear material. It does not matter whether the nuclear material was declared or was produced or comes from dismantled weapons.

I also would like to highlight that over these 30 years, the Agency has gained considerable experience in safeguards operations and, at the same time, protecting sensitive technological, commercial and industrial information provided specifically by nuclear facilities.

In the case of disarmament, where some information is quite sensitive, as far as proliferation is concerned, the Agency has experience in performing the measurements and protecting the information. We have the capability. As Ms. Maceiras said, it is up to the two countries to share this capability for use in other kinds of programmes. Thank you.

The President: Thank you very much. I have no more speakers on my list. I wonder if other delegations would like to take the floor on these topics. That does not seem to be the case. I thank all delegations for participating and hearing the exposés by the Brazilian, the Argentine and the technical authorities that we brought here today.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I now give the floor to the Ambassador Federico Villegas of Argentina for his concluding remarks on the substantive part of our meeting.

Mr. Villegas (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would first like to congratulate you on today's meeting and express my appreciation for the kind words directed to Argentina and Brazil, Brazil and Argentina, regarding the excellent work of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. It has been a pleasure for Argentina to organize this important forum together with Brazil during Brazil's presidency in commemoration of the Agency's 30 years of existence. On 18 July 1991, after a strategic rapprochement and a confidence-building process that had begun to take shape at the highest political level once democracy had returned to both countries, Argentina and Brazil signed, in Guadalajara, an agreement for the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy that led to the creation of our Agency.

It was a milestone in the history of our bilateral relationship and in the region, as a binational safeguards institution was created that is unique in the world and that, in turn, helped the idea of a Latin America free of nuclear weapons take root. For my country, the Agency is synonymous with integration with Brazil and confidence-building in a sensitive, strategic area that we have been present in for more than 70 years, since the creation of the National Atomic Energy Commission.

Argentina considers the safeguards system administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to be the cornerstone of the non-proliferation commitments set out in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In matters of non-proliferation and the potential non-peaceful use of nuclear material, verification is essential. In this regard, the work done in the area of safeguards by the Agency, as an innovative mechanism for the reciprocal inspection of nuclear facilities in the two countries in close cooperation with IAEA, is a central element of Argentine nuclear policy.

As a nuclear non-proliferation body, and more specifically through the administration and implementation of the Common System of Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, the Agency provides concrete assurances to the international community regarding the exclusively peaceful nature of the nuclear programmes of both countries. The Agency has a team of highly qualified inspectors of both nationalities who work jointly with IAEA. Argentina and Brazil are among the countries where the largest number of inspections take place, and inspections were unaffected in 2020, even in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In these times made particularly challenging by the pandemic, the Governments of Argentina and Brazil, the Agency's secretariat and IAEA maintained their commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and non-proliferation. Through a strenuous coordination effort involving all the relevant State agencies, both in Argentina and in Brazil, the inspections were able to take place in compliance with international safeguards commitments, in another clear demonstration to the international community of the Agency's strength.

We are proud of this anniversary because it is the fruit of the two countries' common nuclear policy, which resulted in a sound, exemplary institution. We are also proud to have Elena Maceiras, a professional with an outstanding career in the Argentine nuclear sector and the first female Secretary of the Agency; that she is in this position is evidence of the Agency's commitment to the gender perspective and its determination to continue working so that more women will be able to hold the position in the future.

Finally, I would like to stress that the Agency resulted from the commitments made by both countries and their political will in the nuclear field, and its creation laid the foundations for much broader cooperation in the relations between Brazil and Argentina and transformed us into strategic partners.

Acting in the sensitive area of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and setting an example at the regional and international levels through its application of safeguards, the Agency is an important diplomatic asset in our relations with the world, and both countries are committed to further strengthening it. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you very much, Ambassador Villegas.

I thank again our three panellists for the day's presentations. I think this concludes our work this afternoon.

The secretariat will be in touch with delegations regarding the logistical arrangements for our next plenary meeting. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.