

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Ambassador Antonio Guerreiro, to the 52nd session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Brazilian delegation I would like to warmly and sincerely congratulate you on your unanimous election to preside over the proceedings of the 52nd General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I would like to assure you that you will always count upon the full and active cooperation of our delegation in order to bring our work during this week to successful conclusion. Our congratulations extend to the other officers of this conference.

I wish, on behalf of my Government, to warmly welcome the newly admitted members of the IAEA, Oman, Lesoto and Papua New Guinea. The Brazilian delegation looks forward to establishing close and fraternal working relations with their delegations with a view to furthering our common goals.

Our delegation is very much appreciative of the comprehensive and thoughtful presentation by the Director General of the IAEA. Doctor Mohamed ElBaradei has performed an excellent job as the head of the Agency's Secretariat. As in the past he can count on the unflinching support of the Brazilian Government. Our appreciation also goes to all members of the Secretariat, who, under the Director General's guidance, have shown yet again their professionalism, objectivity and impartiality and have met the high standards the membership has set for them.

Brazil thanks the Secretary General of The United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki Moon, for the presentation delivered on his behalf by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, a distinguished former Brazilian diplomat with an outstanding career.

Once more the membership as a whole has the opportunity to assess the Agency's most recent cycle of activities in the pursuit of its mandate to promote the contribution of nuclear energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world, as enshrined in its Statute. As a founding member, Brazil has spared no effort in bringing about the achievement of this objective. The commitment of Brazil to the peaceful, safe and secure uses of nuclear energy is permanent and unwavering. International cooperation in all peaceful applications of nuclear energy is of the utmost importance for the development efforts of developing countries in particular, and the role of the IAEA in this regard is unique.

Mr. President,

It is auspicious that this year the scientific event which is being held in parallel with the General Conference has as its main focus the future of the IAEA and the role that the international community wants it to play in the years and decades ahead. The basis of the discussions of the forum is the report issued by the Commission of Eminent Persons convened at the initiative of Director General Mohamed ElBaradei and which received the important input of a document prepared by the Secretariat entitled 20/20 Vision for the Future. Chaired by the former President of Mexico, Ernesto Zedillo, the Commission had among its members Ambassador Ronaldo Sardenberg, a distinguished Brazilian diplomat, former Minister for Science and Technology, twice Permanent Representative to the United Nations and now President of the Brazilian National Telecommunications Agency. My delegation would like to thank all Commissioners for their efforts.

The decision by the Director General to convene the Commission was a timely one. We are about to experience a revival of nuclear energy worldwide on account of growing electricity needs, in particular in developing countries, coupled with a widespread recognition that nuclear energy is an economically competitive and environmentally sound alternative to complement other sources. Nowadays very few are those who question the anthropic contribution to climate change, especially by the burning of fossil fuels. The increase in the utilization of atomic energy will present a wide range of opportunities and will also pose many challenges

which will have to be adequately met. To reflect on what we want the IAEA to be and to do in this new environment is essential.

Although we can identify a trend for a growing use of nuclear energy, it is impossible to predict the extent to which this will happen. There are several scenarios being envisaged in different timeframes. The Agency has therefore to be given the tools to adapt as the new circumstances emerge. At present it would be counterproductive to place the IAEA in an institutional and operational straightjacket as if we knew precisely the environment which the Agency will have to deal with decades from now. What we need is flexibility and ingenuity, a capacity to renovate and a commitment to our best traditions, which does not mean clinging to notions which no longer belong to the present, let alone to the future.

If we are to think creatively about the future of the Agency we have to ask ourselves whether it will be able to play a significantly enhanced role if its statute remains unchanged. Do we wish the IAEA to be different from what it is, if we want it to be different at all, only from a managerial perspective? Or do we want it to assume more substantive responsibilities? Will it be in a position to live up to the challenges with which it will be confronted within its present framework? As my delegation stated at the meeting of the Board of Governors last week there is at present no clear-cut answer to these questions. We look forward to having future exchanges about what we want the Agency to be and to do in the future and we are confident that the discussions at the scientific forum will bring useful contributions in this respect.

Mr. President,

As nuclear energy becomes more relevant we can assume that the number of stakeholders in the work of the IAEA will increase. And for the Agency to become a more significant actor we have to make sure that all members of the international community are given a feeling of ownership and belonging. No Member State should feel alienated and all Member States, whether major contributors or not, should feel comfortable that their own priorities are also priorities of the Agency. Inclusiveness, participation and

commitment are essential in the fulfillment of the tasks which we will have to carry out collectively.

It is only natural that different countries ascribe different degrees of importance to the different but interconnected statutory activities of the IAEA. What is important is to implement fully each one of them in a holistic and integrated manner, never eschewing the principles of non-discrimination and non-selectivity. Brazil, for one, attaches the same importance to the main pillars of the Agency, for we are convinced that our organization will not be a healthy one if it is skewed in one direction or the other. The contributions of the Agency to peace and security and to development and the alleviation of poverty and to clean environment are equally valuable, irrespective of whether they derive from treaty obligations or not.

If nuclear energy is to be a consensual source of energy, as we hope it will be, we will have to overcome a number of hurdles. Perhaps the most daunting one is to win the battle of public opinion, which, despite the growing support in many countries for the nuclear option, is not yet won. We are encouraged by the worldwide deepening of a safety culture involving the use of nuclear energy and by the technological developments which allow for the construction of ever safer reactors. On this issue no amount of zeal is too much. One single accident is one too many. We in Brazil know this only too well. Twenty-one years ago in Goiania we experienced the most serious accident ever involving a radioactive source.

We have an obligation to make nuclear energy not only safe but also secure. The prospects that non-State actors might acquire, have access to or use weapons and radioactive materials such as radiological dispersal devices are too dreadful to contemplate. Even though, as repeatedly pointed out, the responsibility for the safety and security of nuclear materials and radioactive sources rests within the purview of States, we should all recognize that it is in the interest of each and everyone of us to abide by the strictest standards. The consequences of nuclear accidents and malicious acts involving nuclear materials or radioactive sources have no respect for national boundaries.

Mr. President,

The role of the Agency mostly associated with the maintenance of international peace and security is in the area of verification in which the IAEA has a unique responsibility as the only institution with a mandate to verify compliance flowing from the non-proliferation commitments enshrined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Brazil fully appreciates the objectivity, impartiality and professionalism with which the Secretariat applies safeguards, belying the epithet of “UN nuclear watchdog”.

While it is true that the Agency has no agreed upon mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament obligations arising from Article VI of the NPT, it is unavoidable that Member States bring to this forum their own perceptions of the progress or the lack thereof in other instances. After all, it should not be forgotten that disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and that further movement in one area is by definition affected by movement in the other.

Much has been said about the proliferation risks that the nuclear renaissance will entail. We consider that those risks are somewhat exaggerated. We simply do not see well founded reasons to draw the conclusion that a greater reliance on nuclear power will lead to the spread of nuclear sensitive technologies. The bulk of new nuclear power plants will be built in countries which already produce their own fuel. Given the difficulties inherent in the development of isotopic separation technologies, the huge investment required, the extensive training of human resources needed and the industrial capacity involved, it is most unlikely that any country wishing to embark upon a nuclear power programme for the first time will attempt to set up its own enrichment facility. All the more so because the market of low enriched uranium works adequately, and we are not aware of any fear of the so-called “new comers” that the provision of fuel to their future nuclear power plants will be interrupted. If, however, a country decides to enrich uranium by itself it has every right to do so, provided it complies with its obligations, including providing the Agency with the necessary design information on the facility to be built. Any reinterpretation of Article IV of the Non-Proliferation Treaty is unacceptable and any attempt to establish a new divide between haves and have-nots underestimates the profound concession made by non-nuclear-weapon States when becoming parties to the NPT.

When listening to the debate on this issue one has the impression that there is an implicit assumption that the safeguards applied by the IAEA to enrichment facilities are not effective and do not achieve their stated purpose. This assumption is simply wrong. There is no record of any case of diversion of nuclear material from a safeguarded nuclear facility.

Mr. President,

Brazil is at present in the process of discussing the future of its nuclear programme, including from an institutional point of view, following the decision, of which my delegation informed the General Conference last year, to complete in the shortest possible delay the construction of the 1,300 MW nuclear power reactor of Angra III, for which the commissioning stages have been finalized with the granting of the licenses required by law. The actual construction work will begin shortly. In addition, it is planned that by 2030 between four and eight new nuclear power plants will be operational, each with an estimated output of 1,000 MW. The Science and Technology section of the Program for the Acceleration of Growth (PAC), already approved and funded by Congress, provides for the conclusion of the conversion pilot plan for the production of uranium hexafluoride in Aramar, São Paulo. It also provides for the expansion of the commercial uranium enrichment plant in Resende, Rio de Janeiro, with a view ultimately to self-sufficiency in low enriched uranium. Brazil also plans to increase the production of radioisotopes to meet the entirety of our domestic demand.

On the 22nd of February 2008, in Buenos Aires, the President of Brazil Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the President of Argentina Cristina Fernández de Kirchner issued a formal declaration on the wide spectrum of the bilateral relations. In the section of this formal document dealing with nuclear cooperation both Heads of State determined the constitution of a bilateral commission responsible for the development of a model nuclear power reactor to meet the electricity needs of the two countries and, eventually, of the region. The two Presidents also determined that the competent entities in Argentina and in Brazil should define a common project in the area of the nuclear fuel cycle and expressed their intention to constitute a bi-national enterprise for uranium enrichment. I am pleased to announce that, despite

the magnitude of the task entrusted to the competent authorities, work is proceeding at an accelerated pace to fulfill the mandate received by the two Heads of State. This is being made possible by virtue of the unrelenting efforts of the respective nuclear national commissions. The President of the Brazilian National Commission, Odair Dias Gonçalves, is present at this General Conference.

The decision of the Governments of Brazil and Argentina stems from the need felt by both sides to further integrate the nuclear activities in the two countries, in addition to the existing and well established bilateral arrangements in the field of safeguards, embodied in the Argentine-Brazilian Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Material (ABACC) which is successfully operating since 1991 and whose Secretary, Antonio Abel de Oliveira, of Argentina, is in our midst today and will be addressing the General Conference at a later stage. We welcome the progress achieved in the cooperation between the IAEA and ABACC for the application of safeguards under the Quadripartite Agreement, which is the comprehensive safeguards agreement in force for Brazil and Argentina. Significant improvements have been made with the establishment of guidelines for joint safeguards activities at several nuclear facilities and of procedures for unannounced inspections and for common use of safeguards equipment. More improvements still need to be made and we hope that the next meeting of the Liaison Committee will be fruitful in this regard. Brazil attaches high importance to the cooperation between the IAEA and ABACC and requests both agencies to continue to pursue coordination as a permanent goal in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts and to achieve cost-effectiveness in safeguards activities.

Mr. President,

We made some general remarks on some of the issues which we consider important. We abstained from commenting in detail on the work of the IAEA since we have done so at the level of the Board of Governors. Allow me, once again, to congratulate the Director General and the Agency's staff for a job well done and pledge our full support to your efforts as President to bring the General Conference to a successful outcome.

Thank you for your attention