

SPECIAL SESSION OF COUNCIL NO. 97-09
24 October 1997

SUMMARY RECORD

The Council held a special session on 24 October 1997 in Montreal, Canada. Administrator Carol M. Browner (USA) chaired the meeting. Minister Christine Stewart and Secretary Julia Carabias represented Canada and Mexico, respectively. Mr. Victor Lichtinger, Executive Director of the Secretariat also participated in the meeting together with other officials. Ms. Maria Cristina Castro, Chair of JPAC and other JPAC members attended part of the session together with Messrs. Pierre Marc Johnson and Alberto Székely. Mr. Marc Paquin acted as secretary. The list of participants can be found as Annex A.

Item 1 Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda

In accordance with Council Rules of Procedure (R. 9.6), the Council adopted the agenda at the beginning of the session based on the provisional agenda (see Annex B).

Item 2 Presentation by the Independent Review Committee

The Council heard from Messrs. Pierre Marc Johnson and Alberto Székely who presented the recommendations of the Independent Review Committee which met last April to review the operation and effectiveness of the NAAEC.

Summarizing the recommendations of the Independent Review Committee, Mr. Székely first indicated that, despite trends towards continuous government downsizing in areas of environmental protection, in certain countries, substantive achievements have been made since 1995, including the development of regional action plans to reduce certain hazardous chemicals; the North American emissions inventory; technology information services; and mechanisms to ensure and promote public participation. He also mentioned that the CEC is still a fragile institution which is unique in character and experimental, largely because it is new. Mr. Székely then presented 12 specific action-oriented recommendations that the Review Committee identified in its report. These recommendations fall in six key areas where greater substantial commitment from the Parties and the CEC is deemed necessary to ensure that the CEC's mandate and the goals of the NAAEC are fulfilled. These 12 recommendations are the following:

- i) Since there is already sufficient material to evaluate the impacts of trade and investment on the environment, a greater commitment is required from the governments to identify, understand and respond to these impacts, and translating that commitment into an appropriate setting of priorities in the work program.
- ii) The Parties and the Council should establish a credible mechanism for the periodic assessment of the compliance by the Parties of their obligations in the NAAEC, including specific follow up on program-related commitments;

- iii) As the CEC enters its fourth year of operations, it needs larger, more stable and timely financing because its work has since deepened and broadened;
- iv) The CEC must build on the momentum it has created and reach out to include a broader participation, including parliamentarians of all three countries;
- v) To ensure its credibility, the CEC requires a sufficient degree of autonomy and independence in its operations so as to allow it to offer alternatives to the Parties on such issues as the relationship between trade and environment;
- vi) The CEC should focus its work program and priorities on matters of regional environmental importance, transboundary issues and the effects of economic development on the environment;
- vii) The CEC should engage in a longer-term and more strategic planning, extending its current budgetary program from one to three years;
- viii) The publication of the State of the North American Environment should become a regular feature of the work program of the CEC and it should be developed and published every three years;
- ix) To facilitate the work in the area of environment and economy, relations should be encouraged with the trade sector and other communities, including a better relationship between the CEC Secretariat and the NAFTA Free Trade Commission;
- x) The Council should focus efforts on enhanced consensus-building both within and between governments as part of an important political commitment;
- xi) The Parties should be urged to capitalize on the Commission's experience and identify areas where the CEC might assist the parties in fulfilling their commitments in global treaties or agreements;
- xii) An independent review of the mandate and the operations of the NAAEC should be carried out every four years.

Mr. Székely finally emphasized that the transboundary environmental impact assessment is one of the most important instruments for the protection of the environment of our region, without which it would be difficult to understand the real *raison d'être* of the NAAEC, as it aims at establishing an efficient, cooperative mechanism to prevent degradation of the environment. According to Mr. Székely, the seriousness of the Agreement and the CEC as an institution would be at stake should the Parties, contrary to the NAAEC provisions and its Council resolution, fail to conclude a legally-binding agreement on TEIA.

Reflecting on the context that led to the creation of the CEC, Mr. Pierre Marc Johnson recalled that when the Parties were negotiating the NAFTA, they also chose to set up the CEC to further the commitments of the NAFTA to promote sustainable development. Therefore the credibility and usefulness of the CEC for governments, citizens and the environment rests on its capacity to analyze and to deepen the issues that link environment and trade. Obviously the mandate of the CEC may involve sensitivities due to the often conflicting views and interests of the governments, the public, the NGOs and the trade experts on these issues. The mandate of the CEC is also

unique in the sense that this institution is about approaching from a different perspective the trade-environment issues by trying to break down the antinomy which the traditional approach to these issues has so far resulted in.

On the management of Articles 13, 14 and 15 of the NAAEC, Mr. Johnson indicated that the CEC has a good understanding of the various implications and is therefore in a good position to handle them appropriately, even though this is done in the context of NGO and government pressures. The CEC is a unique forum for sensitizing the NGO community to regional environmental issues.

On the trade links related to NAFTA, Mr. Johnson indicated that the CEC can go one step beyond the OECD and WTO, because it puts theory into practice. This model of the trade and environment link may very well be copied in Europe, if the CEC continues its work. The CEC can also play a useful role under the 10(6) (c) in conflict avoidance by creating fora where the three Parties can look at these sensitive issues. The CEC also has to be sensitive to citizens' concerns and show that governments are not only concerned with the businesses' capacity to increase their wealth.

Mr. Johnson then mentioned that the level of funding for the CEC should stay as it stands. The CEC has developed a serious and solid methodology of approaching complex issues in a trilateral content, however, political commitment is needed from the governments. He also indicated that one of the problems of the CEC is to be on the "radar screens" of politicians as are so many issues. This situation has given the Commission a hard time because there is a lot of straddling as a result of the involvement of the trade community, which is controlling the scene.

Finally, Mr. Johnson described the relationship with trade and foreign ministries as being of utmost importance and suggested that it could be interesting to see people from the foreign and trade departments to be involved in various committees and structures of the CEC. This would contribute to the very constructive role of the Commission in addressing environment and trade links, climate change, water issues and preventing conflicts among the Parties to the Agreement.

Item 3 Meeting with JPAC

Under this item, JPAC members in attendance presented their views on various issues of relevance for the CEC. The Chair of JPAC, Ms. Maria Cristina Castro first presented an overview of JPAC activities completed throughout the year, focusing on the public consultations held by the JPAC. Then, Mr. John Wirth talked about the need for CEC's work to be more visible and also of the great relevance of the Article 13 reports prepared by the Secretariat or presently in preparation. He also indicated that the NAFEC budget should be free standing so as not to affect the budget of the CEC. Mary Simon later talked about the relationship between human health and the environment and the importance for the CEC to consider the human dimension in environmental decision making, both at the individual level and at the community level, stressing that human health is an important indicator of sustainable development. Ivan Restrepo indicated that a strategy for informing the public needs to be developed by the CEC to fill the information vacuum about the CEC and reverse the negative image the media depicts in his views of both the CEC and

the JPAC. Jonathan Plaut then presented the views of the JPAC on the environment and trade relationships and on various constituencies' understanding and desire for leadership from the CEC and governments in that field. He also discussed the strong support he has encountered for environmental training workshops on the Mexican-US border, and encouraged such programs as "on-the-ground action" on environment and trade issues. Mr. Jacques Gérin spoke to the issue of the review of the NAAEC and referred to the CEC as an innovative institution with great potential, but which remains very fragile. Mr. Gérin indicated that one of the greatest threats the CEC faces is the lack of interest and support, at the political level, from all three governments. Mr. Michael Cloghesy indicated that the CEC is an opportunity to change the model we are currently working under, i.e. a model based on the dichotomy between trade and environment. For Mr. Cloghesy, the CEC should be the place where trade departments and environment departments learn to work together to serve as an example for the rest of the world.

Ms. María Cristina Castro concluded the JPAC presentations by emphasizing that, in order that fair criteria can be applied to achieve an integral environmental approach in North America, it is important to remember the asymmetry among the Parties. Although the financial contributions of the Parties are equivalent, they represent, based on the relative size of their GNPs, 1 unit for the United States, 12 units for Canada and 26 units for Mexico. It is important to ensure that access conditions for submitting requests to NAFEC be the same for all applicants from the three countries, and that they focus on building capacity of local groups for dealing with environmental issues. She also emphasized her concerns over the reduction in the amount of the CEC's budget allocated to program implementation over the years.

Statement by Minister Stewart

Minister Stewart first acknowledged the work and the dedication of all those involved in the CEC since its inception. Commenting on the presentation from the two Review Committee representatives and from JPAC, she agreed that the CEC is a unique organization that should not be taken for granted. Minister Stewart summarized her view by stressing that if the CEC did not exist, it would have to be created.

Minister Stewart indicated that Canada understands that one of the greatest frustrations the CEC is experiencing results from the lack of political commitment to the institution. She stressed that because of its importance, the organization deserves more attention from the governments. Minister Stewart was of the opinion that the CEC needs a higher profile that may, in some instances, generate controversy. To have this, she said that the CEC needs to be more relevant to the public of each country. A work program focused on environmental health, and trade and environment, which attacks the myth that more trade means lowered environmental quality and more attention to the environment means less trade, would be a way to achieve that goal.

She also foresees that much can be done by all Parties on basic environmental issues, such as protection of endangered species and elimination of toxic pollutants from the air, water, and soil. She concluded her statement by calling upon her American and Mexican counterparts to examine how, together, they could take a more pragmatic approach to dealing with these issues. Minister Stewart indicated that, based on her experience, direct contact with her counterparts is an

effective means of making progress on issues of common interest, and she felt that such contact would greatly assist the CEC's work.

Statement by Secretary Carabias

Thanking JPAC for the enormous contribution it has made to the CEC over the past years, Secretary Carabias pointed out that what makes the work of JPAC effective is that it is consensus-based, and it has thus contributed to the firm foundation upon which the CEC rests. Even though JPAC has at times been critical of the CEC's efforts, it has always been constructive. Secretary Carabias indicated that she looks forward to a strong continued presence from JPAC in the activities of the CEC. She then thanked the members of the Review Committee for their work and acknowledged Alberto Székely's great contribution to the amending of Mexico's General Law of Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection.

Secretary Carabias was of the opinion that, as a result of these past three years of work, the Parties have been able to establish the CEC as an important institution, both regionally and internationally. Reflecting on the importance of political will and commitment from the governments to ensure that the CEC receives adequate support, she indicated that the CEC has been given central recognition in Mexico. The size of the budget contribution from Mexico allocated to the CEC, compared to that for environmental protection in the country, underscores the importance of the CEC in Mexico. Nevertheless, Secretary Carabias indicated that it is Mexico's view, and probably that of Canada and the United States as well, that support for the CEC has not led to expected results. Hence, Secretary Carabias stressed the importance of ensuring that the CEC plays a stronger role in the development of environmental policy in all three countries. She recognized that although Mexico is not yet fully satisfied with the CEC's achievements, major progress has been made. She proposed working on areas where the Parties feel progress can be made and stressed that in order to reposition and strengthen the CEC's foundations, the Parties have to ask themselves how, on what, and for what the CEC is working.

Secretary Carabias was of the opinion that the following five qualifiers best describe the CEC: fragile; unique; experimental and innovative; and with enormous potential.

- **Fragile:** She attributed the fragile nature of the CEC to the difficulties it is facing in coordinating the planning and development of environmental policies in the three countries, including environment and trade policies, and indicated that this situation has created antagonism in government departments. She added that progress must be made on that front, but recognized that the difficulty is to ensure that each step is taken very carefully so as not to damage the working relationships.
- **Unique:** The CEC is unique because of its mission; as an organization, it has a mandate unlike any other in the world. For example, the link between the environment and trade occupies a special niche at the CEC. The CEC is also unique because of its nature as a public forum where public participation is central and where decisions made by the Council consider and may incorporate public opinion. Furthermore, Secretary Carabias indicated that the way the CEC encompasses public participation in its activities could serve as a model for other

organizations, such as APEC, OECD and UNEP. In that regard, she invited the Parties, with the assistance of JPAC, to study the CEC's position more closely from an environmental perspective and to ask themselves whether the CEC is now where it was supposed to be when it was created.

- **Experimental and innovative:** Secretary Carabias acknowledged that the work of the CEC is experimental and innovative, and warned that these characteristics may also have significant repercussions for governments. She proposed that the Parties be very thoughtful and careful in the manner in which they advance their proposals in the CEC.
- **Potential:** Secretary Carabias recognized that the CEC has the potential to do many things but that special niches for the CEC need to be identified clearly, one that should, in general terms, focus on the promotion of sustainable development through NAFTA. She indicated that duplication of efforts and activities already undertaken at national, binational, or trilateral levels, as has happened until now, should be avoided at all cost.

Secretary Carabias continued by stating that the Work Program should be reviewed in order to avoid duplication, priorities set, and a long-term strategy developed. In terms of financing, she was of the opinion that there seems to be a problem of equity when comparing each Party's contribution in relation to its respective GNP. Secretary Carabias also indicated that the reduction of resources allocated to projects as opposed to the increased allocation to the administrative apparatus was a preoccupation, and indicated that she would welcome more transparency in the use of resources in order to facilitate understanding.

Reflecting on Articles 13, 14 and 15, she indicated that changes in the way they operate—not in their substances—are required. In addition, clearer standards must be observed. After these first four years of experience, the application of these articles and the manner in which they operate should be reviewed.

Secretary Carabias concluded her statement by expressing her agreement with the recommendation of Maurice Strong's Review Committee on the participation of legislative members in the CEC's activities, and proposed that such participation be enhanced.

Statement by Administrator Browner

Building on the views expressed by the Canadian and Mexican members, Administrator Browner reminded those present that, despite impatience from the public for accomplishment, it is extremely important to recognize that the CEC is a relatively young organization. She acknowledged the significance of the undertaking the CEC represents, both in terms of creating the mechanisms which will allow it to function and in the application of those mechanisms. In that regard, Administrator Browner indicated that those who have been part of this process over the last four years can be proud of the results their efforts have yielded.

Administrator Browner was pleased to hear from both the JPAC and the representatives of the Review Committee, who focused on issues of concern to her. She emphasized that the ultimate

strength of the CEC will come from its ability to engage the public, which must believe that the CEC speaks to its needs. She stressed the extreme importance of human health aspects of environmental protection, which is a central theme where the CEC can demonstrate to the public the relevancy of its work. She also stressed that, as the CEC moves forward, it is important to think about what mechanisms can be developed to engage the public more fully in the three countries, involving and speaking to it in order to generate the strength of consensus. In this task, JPAC can help.

Administrator Browner then called upon those present to share their views on how they think the Parties can best engage the public in the work they are doing on its behalf. She pointed out that the greatest challenge in the relationship between trade and environment is actually incumbent on the Parties because they have yet to determine how this organization can really address that issue. She also urged that the Parties must show the positive and negative effects of expanded trade on the environment and referred to the NAFTA Effects project as an important undertaking in that regard.

Concluding her statement, Administrator Browner indicated that at the onset of the twenty-first century, trade and environment issues are, without a doubt, at the forefront of public attention. She doubted that any other group or organization possesses the opportunity the CEC has been given—to articulate the way in which, as a world, we think about trade and environment, and stressed that while the first efforts may fall short, failure when trying something new is not a disgrace.

Item 4 Article 14: Final factual record in relation to the Cruise Ship Pier in Cozumel, Quintana Roo

In accordance with Article 15(7), the Council unanimously agreed to make the final factual record in relation to the Cruise Ship Pier in Cozumel, Quintana Roo publicly available (see Annex C for the related communiqué released by the Secretariat).

Item 5 Review of session communiqué

The Council discussed and approved the communiqué of the session which was later released at the end of the session. The final communiqué can be found as Annex D.

Item 6 Other Business

The Council instructed the Alternate Representatives to review the process leading to the approval of summary records.

Item 9 Closure of the Session

The Chair closed the session at 4:00 PM, two hours later than initially scheduled.

Prepared by: Marc Paquin, Council Secretary

SPECIAL SESSION OF COUNCIL

Friday, October 24, 1997
Secretariat of the CEC, Montreal, Canada

CANADIAN DELEGATION

Council Member: The Honourable Christine Stewart, Minister of the Environment
Alternate Representative: Avrim Lazar, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy and Communication

Other Representatives: Bowcott, Andy (Environment Canada)
Brock, Dan (Press Secretary)
Cerutti, Rita (Environment Canada)
Côté, Louise (Foreign Affairs and International Trade)
Hoskin, Wanda (EMR)
Lanthier, Jacline (Chef de cabinet)
Nudell, Roslyn (DOE Media)
Trimbee, Annette (Alberta Environmental Protection)
Wilkinson, Cathy (Senior Policy Advisor)

MEXICAN DELEGATION

Council Member: Secretaria Julia Carabias Lillo, SEMARNAP
Alternate Representative: José Luis Samaniego, Coordinador de Asuntos Internacionales, SEMARNAP

Other Representatives: Mario Aguilar (SEMARNAP)
Sergio Gómez Lora (SECOFI)

UNITED STATES DELEGATION

Council Member: Administrator Carol M. Browner, EPA
Alternate Representative: William A Nitze, Assistant Administrator, EPA

Other Representatives: Wilson, Serena (EPA NAFTA Coordinator)
Berman, David (Special Assistant to the Administrator)

ANNOTATED AGENDA
for the
SPECIAL SESSION OF COUNCIL

Held at the Secretariat of the CEC
393 St-Jacques Street West, Suite 200, Montreal
Friday, 24 October 1997 from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

CHAIR: Administrator Carol M. Browner (United States)

- Item 1 Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda
- Item 2 Presentation by the Independent Review Committee
- Item 3 Meeting with JPAC
- Item A Statement by the Executive Director (not reported in Summary Record)
- Item B Future direction of the CEC (not reported in Summary Record)
- Item 4 Article 14 - Final factual record in relation to the Cruise Ship Pier in Cozumel,
 Quintana Roo
- Item 5 Finalization of session communiqué
- Item 6 Other business
- Item 7 Closure of the session

SPECIAL SESSION OF COUNCIL
ANNOTATIONS

The Special Session will take place at the Secretariat of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation in Montreal. The session will be opened at 8:00 AM on 24 October 1997, by the Chairperson.

Item 1 Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda (10 min.)

In accordance with Council Rules of Procedure (R. 9.6) the Council shall adopt the agenda for the session at the beginning of the session based on the provisional agenda. The Council is therefore expected to adopt the agenda.

The Chairperson will call the meeting to order, make any special announcements, acknowledge the presence of special participants and comment on the general conduct of the session. The Chairperson will then invite the other two Council members to make opening statements and will conclude with her own opening statement.

DOCUMENTS:

- a) Provisional annotated agenda C/97-09/AGEN/01/Rev.8

Item 2 Presentation by the Independent Review Committee (1 hour)

Under this item, a representative of the independent committee that met last April to review the operation and effectiveness of the NAAEC, will present the committee's recommendations. The Council may then wish to exchange views on the committee's report.

The JPAC members will be invited to attend the presentation as observers

DOCUMENTS:

- a) Letter from the Independent review Committee signed by Maurice Strong

Item 3 Meeting with JPAC (1 hour)

Under this item, the Council will meet with JPAC members. Further to JPAC's presentation of its advices to Council, the Council may wish to provide guidance for JPAC activities in the coming year.

DOCUMENTS:

- a) Report to Council on 1997 Public Consultations
b) Advice to Council 97-01 J/97-00/ADV/r04

IN CAMERA SESSION

Item A Statement by the Executive Director (15 min.)

In accordance with Council Rules of procedure (R. 5.3), the Executive Director may make oral and written statements to the Council. Under this item, the Executive Director is expected to make an oral statement to the Council.

DOCUMENTS: No document

Item B Future direction of the CEC (2:30 hours)

Under this item, the Council is expected to discuss the future direction of the CEC in light of the experience gained from the first four years of operation. More specifically, the Council members may wish to discuss the current state

of sustainable development, trade, environment as well as trade & environment policies in their respective countries.

The Council may then wish to discuss the general direction of the work program of the CEC, including trade and environment issues, in light of available funds.

DOCUMENTS:

- a) Reflections on the CEC mission and functions
- b) Breakdown by program area

C/97-09/DISC/01

Item 4 Article 14 - Final factual record in relation to the Cruise Ship Pier in Cozumel, Quintana Roo (15 min.)

In accordance with Article 15(7) of NAAEC, the Council may, by a two-thirds vote, make the final factual record publicly available, normally within 60 days following its submission. As of August 1, 1997 the Final Factual Record prepared by the Secretariat had been received by the three Parties. The Parties may wish to take a decision on making the Final Factual Record available to the public.

DOCUMENTS:

- a) Final Factual Record in relation to the “Cruise Ship Pier in Cozumel, Quintana Roo”

Item 5 Finalization of session communiqué (30 min.)

Under this item, the Council is asked to review and to make final adjustments to the session communiqué to be released at the end of the session.

DOCUMENTS:

- a) Session communiqué

C/97-09/COMM

Item 6 Other business (5 min.)

At the time of writing, the Secretariat has no point to propose under this item.

Item 7 Closure of the session (5 min.)

The Chair of the session will make any final announcements, acknowledge the contribution of participants and observe on the general conduct of the session. The Chairperson will invite the other two Council members to make any final statements and will then bring the meeting to a close.

DOCUMENTS: No document



Commission de coopération environnementale Annex C

Comisión para la Cooperación Ambiental

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

PRESS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE ON

Friday, 24 October, 1997

CONTACT RACHEL VINCENT

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

Tel: (514) 350-4308 / e-mail: rvincent@cemtl.org

NAFTA Environment Ministers Release Cozumel Factual Record To The Public

--Montreal, 24 October, 1997.

The Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) today instructed the CEC Secretariat to release to the public the *Final Factual Record of the Cruise Ship Pier Project in Cozumel, Quintana Roo*.

The factual record was prepared by the CEC Secretariat in response to a public submission filed last year, alleging failure to enforce environmental laws concerning the environmental impact assessment procedures in relation to the construction of pier and port facilities in Cozumel, Mexico.

The factual record does not reach legal conclusions or determinations. The purpose of the factual record is to clarify the facts as they pertain to allegations raised by the submitter and information provided by the Parties and public.

The Secretariat prepared the factual record in accordance with Article 15 of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), otherwise known as the environmental side accord to NAFTA. Under articles 14 and 15 of the NAAEC, any person or organization may file a submission with the Secretariat of the CEC alleging that one of the NAFTA countries is failing to effectively enforce its environmental law. The CEC Secretariat submitted its final factual record to the CEC Council on July 30.

The CEC Council is made up of Canadian Environment Minister Christine Stewart, Mexican Secretary of Environment, Fisheries and Natural Resources Julia Carabias and US EPA Administrator Carol Browner.

The three Mexican organizations which filed the submission are the Mexican Center for Environmental Law, the Grupo de los Cien and the Natural Resources Protection Committee.

The submission and other relevant documents related to the development of the factual record are available on the CEC Website: <http://www.cec.org>.

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For more information, please contact Rachel Vincent at the CEC Secretariat: 514-350-4300, or by e-mail at rvincent@cemtl.org.



Commission de coopération environnementale

Annex D

Comisión para la Cooperación Ambiental

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

COMMUNIQUÉ

For Release on:
Friday, 24 October 1997

Contact: Rachel Vincent
Commission for Environmental Cooperation
Tel: (514) 350-4308 / e-mail: rvincent@ccemtl.org

COMMUNIQUÉ: SPECIAL SESSION OF COUNCIL

—**Montreal, 24 October 1997.**

The Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)—composed of Canadian Environment Minister Christine Stewart, Mexican Secretary of Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries Julia Carabias and US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol M.

Browner—today met in a special session to discuss future cooperation on environmental issues of common concern, and identify progress on actions taken to implement the goals set under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), the environmental side accord to NAFTA.

Reviewing Progress and Charting the Future

The Council examined the approaches and results of the NAAEC implementation over the past three years as part of its overall analysis on the future direction of the CEC. In the NAAEC, the NAFTA partners agreed to review the operations and implementation of the agreement within four years of its entry into force. In their discussions, the three environment leaders emphasized the importance of being responsive to the evolving environmental circumstances in North America. In anticipation of this final review, the Council today heard from a group of independent experts who had been led by Maurice Strong and the CEC's Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC). The final Council report on the review will be available to the public in early 1998.

Expanding the Environment and Trade Agenda

The environmental leaders recognized the unique nature of the CEC as a trilateral institution and as the only regional environmental organization that has its roots in a trade agreement. The CEC is in a natural and privileged position to advance the understanding of the relationship between the environment and trade. The Council directed the Secretariat to develop a conceptual framework for an expanded trade and environment program in 1998. This framework will take into consideration the following objectives: encourage a strong environment and trade program that looks at both positive and negative impacts of trade; consult experts to develop the means of measuring those impacts; ensure public participation in environment and trade issues; evaluate the role the CEC could play in enhancing trade in “green” goods;



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expand public access to environmental information; engage the private sector in environment-trade initiatives; and direct the North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (NAFEC) to consider funding projects related to environment and trade issues.

Selection of Additional Toxic Substances

The Council has announced it will evaluate an initial group of toxic substances against criteria it has agreed will be used to identify new toxic substances for regional action. Such regional action plans are aimed at reducing the harmful health and environmental risks posed by the presence of toxic substances in the North American environment.