

**FIFTEENTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE COUNCIL
Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)**

**26 June 2008
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada**

SUMMARY RECORD

The Council held its fifteenth Regular Session on 26 June 2008, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. John Baird, Canadian Minister of the Environment, chaired the meeting, Juan Elvira Quesada, Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources, and Stephen L. Johnson, Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency, represented Mexico and the United States, respectively. Adrián Vázquez, CEC Executive Director, represented the Secretariat. Nathalie Daoust, Council Secretary, acted as secretary for the Session. Other delegates and special invitees were also in attendance (*list of participants*).

Item 1 Official opening of the 15th Regular Session of the Council

Minister Baird officially opened the Session and welcomed the participants to Ottawa, his hometown and riding. Referring to the good advice of his grandmother, he noted our common responsibility as citizens to ensure we leave our planet in a better state than we found it. In this regard, he pointed to efforts underway to fight global warming and work toward the improvement of air and water quality. He reaffirmed Canada's commitment to work on a regional scale to promote the pursuit of trade growth in an environmentally sustainable manner.

On behalf of the United States, Administrator Johnson addressed the audience. He mentioned that this represented his fourth Council session and that through these years he had developed a lot of respect for the joint work of government officials and the CEC in facing environmental challenges in North America. He underlined how common efforts could accelerate environmental protection. He pointed to the strategic direction adopted four years ago, calling for the CEC to be a "catalyst for change" that focuses on the delivery of results in North America and noted that tremendous progress had been achieved. He looked forward to the reports on recent accomplishments and to initiating discussions on the 2010–2015 Strategic Plan.

Secretary Elvira, on behalf of Mexico, also recognized the cooperative work undertaken with Canada and the United States and indicated that he looked forward to hearing the Executive Director's report the next day. He said this represented a very important meeting for Mexico, as discussions on future objectives would be initiated. He stressed that although the CEC had been created to avoid the expected negative environmental impacts of trade, it had now become an important tool for integration among the three countries. In his view, this meeting represented an opportunity to review and continue improving regional efforts in order to become an example for other regions of the world.

Line Beauchamp, Quebec's Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks, noted the active participation of the government of Quebec in the CEC. She explained that NAFTA was important to stimulate the economic development of the province and that NAAEC was equally

important for ensuring its sustainable development. She pointed to ambitious efforts carried out in recent years by the government of Quebec to use market forces in support of sustainable development. She gave as examples the promotion of green technologies, the greening of trade corridors, and the expansion of protected areas in the province.

Jane Gardner, chair of the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), pointed to the very successful conference held that day, where eye-opening environmental issues had been presented by renowned speakers. She told the ministers she looked forward to reporting on the Session. Again, she reiterated JPAC's role as the voice of the public and how communicating the public's perspective was a responsibility JPAC took very seriously. As such, she looked forward to a candid discussion with the ministers the next day and to hearing their views on how best to tackle the environmental conditions presented at the conference.

Adrián Vázquez congratulated Minister Baird for the extensive work carried out by his team in ensuring the success of the event. Looking to the future work of the CEC, he mentioned that the Secretariat had begun seeking the views of experts across North America on emerging environmental trends and would continue working with the Parties in assessing which are the priority topics and the best opportunities for the CEC. He recognized the Council's interest and trust in the CEC's work and in its ability to implement initiatives and achieve results. In closing, he noted that beyond the CEC, one needed to acknowledge the importance of the cooperation being achieved by the three countries as well as the important contribution of the public in signaling vital environmental issues.

Item 2 Adoption of the agenda

As chair, Minister Baird welcomed the audience to Ottawa and particularly to the Government Conference Center, which has served as a venue for historically important gatherings. He opened the 15th Regular Session of the Council, noting the importance of this meeting for discussing the cooperative efforts among the three countries and in building on the discussions held the previous day at the Outlook Conference. He added that he looked forward to a spirited dialogue, both formal and informal. He also mentioned that, for the second year, the Council's exchange was being held before the public, and that this year also featured a live webcast of the event, in line with the spirit of transparency that is key to accountability.

Both his counterparts, Secretary Elvira and Administrator Johnson, welcomed the public and the delegates and thanked their host for his hospitality, the Secretariat for its valuable work, and JPAC for its involvement in the CEC's work. They also echoed the importance of this meeting for their respective countries. Secretary Elvira assured the others of Mexico's commitment to the CEC as a convener and coordinator of collaborative efforts for sustainable development in the three countries. Administrator Johnson emphasized how the environmental challenges knew no political or geographical boundaries and that the cooperation between the three countries and the involvement of all stakeholders were crucial in this context. He stressed the importance for all three governments of delivering results and said that he looked forward to hearing the progress reports. Turning to the future, he indicated he also looked forward to charting the CEC's course for the next five years. He noted that it was important for the three countries to work together through the CEC and be involved in other international activities to face their common environmental challenges.

Minister Baird introduced again Line Beauchamp, Quebec's Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks, and explained that the environment portfolio in Canada is shared with the provinces. Minister Beauchamp began by thanking the host and stating how the CEC represented a valuable instrument in North America, particularly in terms of ensuring the compatibility between economic growth and sustainable development. She greeted the public and underscored the importance of their participation as partners and their actions to safeguard the environment. She emphasized that the government of Quebec does take to heart the responsibilities it shares with the federal government and that, as the responsible minister, she looked forward to fulfilling the environmental commitments made during this session.

The Session Agenda was adopted by the Council as drafted (the Council Session agenda can be found at: http://www.cec.org/pubs_docs/documents/index.cfm?varlan=english&ID=2259).

Item 3 Report from the Executive Director

Minister Baird invited the Executive Director to report on CEC accomplishments since the last Council Session (as per Rule 5.3 of Council Rules of Procedure). Before presenting his report, Mr. Vazquez commended Council's intent to focus the work of the CEC on achieving concrete and visible results for North America and to produce relevant deliverables. He stressed that this is the spirit which animated the work of the CEC this past year and noted particularly the excellent and productive collaboration between the Parties and the Secretariat. He then proceeded to describe the numerous CEC accomplishments over the past year under the three Puebla pillars. (The full report from the executive director can be found at: http://www.cec.org/pubs_docs/documents/index.cfm?varlan=english&ID=2500).

Administrator Johnson congratulated the CEC for the work accomplished since the 2007 Council session. He noted that progress achieved under the three pillars of the 2005–2010 Strategic Plan was helping to advance the protection of the North American environment and that the CEC offered a framework that could be replicated in other regions of the globe. He gave as examples the chemicals-monitoring efforts, the Atlas, and the state-of-the-environment and capacity-building activities. He noted the need to continue developing law enforcement capacities and addressing issues such as ozone-depleting substances. He took the opportunity to underline pressing issues such as the protection of the ozone layer and thanked Minister Baird for his leadership during the Montreal Protocol meeting which led to the signing of another historical agreement. He also pointed to trade-related issues, such as the importance of achieving trade objectives while strengthening the environment.

Secretary Elvira thanked the Executive Director for his report and expressed appreciation for CEC the work accomplished by the CEC since the last Council session in Morelia. He pointed to progress achieved under the SMOC program as well as in implementing the 2007 Council decision in Morelia to develop conservation action plans for two species of common concern, the vaquita and the monarch butterfly. Regarding the project on greening supply chains, he noted important progress achieved in recent years and expressed Mexico's desire to take over the project. As for the Article 13 report on green building, he stressed how this topic was of national relevance in Mexico and added that the objective of President Calderón's administration was to build one million green homes in Mexico during its mandate. He also referred to the Convening of Indigenous Peoples for the Healing of Mother Earth, in Palenque, Mexico, and the importance for the three countries to pursue what had been laid out

in the joint declaration in order to involve the 200 indigenous communities of North America in protecting the environment. In his closing remarks, he stressed the importance of JPAC and the participation of the public in the work of the CEC.

Minister Baird thanked the Executive Director for highlighting progress in the three areas of work of the CEC. He noted the value of enhanced information, not only for government decision-making but also as an accountability mechanism and information tool for citizens alike. He pointed to the project on greening the auto sector as an example of how there needs to be a strong consideration for international trade aspects in the work of the CEC.

Item 4.1 NAFTA and the North American environment

Item 4.1.1 Results and opportunities for cooperation

The chair introduced Jeffrey Schott, Senior Fellow of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, and invited him to initiate discussion of the environmental consequences of NAAEC and NAFTA, as well as of opportunities for continued cooperation among the three countries. Mr. Schott briefly highlighted key accomplishments of the CEC since its inception and made a number of recommendations about future areas of cooperation for the three NAFTA partners (The statement presented by Jeffrey Schott can be found at:

http://www.cec.org/pubs_docs/documents/index.cfm?varlan=english&ID=2501).

Minister Baird thanked the speaker for his insightful presentation. He stressed that notwithstanding the importance of environmental laws, the enforcement of these laws was particularly important in the area of trade. He then pointed to the ongoing discussions on climate change among the three countries and the strong commitment expressed in the joint declaration of the April 2008 North American Leaders' Summit. He pointed to Mexico as a rising leader in the context of global international agreements and indicated that Canada looked forward to working with other countries through the Major Economies Meetings (MEM) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, pursuing the momentum towards international agreements. He expressed concerns, however, for the growing number of international forums on climate change and cautioned against duplicating efforts.

Referring to Mr. Schott's comment on other trade agreements, Secretary Elvira underscored how the cooperative agenda of the CEC had particularly contributed to strengthening the capacity of the three countries to protect the environment. He stressed the importance of defining the links between trade and the quality of the environment. Concerning ongoing discussions on climate change, he stated that, in his view, the CEC could complement the commitments and objectives agreed upon in the context of other international forums. Turning to domestic efforts to protect the environment, he indicated that eco-competitiveness, equity and social development were important objectives for Mexico. In this regard, he mentioned how Mexico has increased its wastewater treatment to 36% in the last year and how, by 2012, the objective was to reach the level of 60%.

Administrator Johnson thanked the speaker and noted that NAFTA, through its side agreement, has yielded important benefits for the environment. Referring to the CEC's pollutant release and transfer register project, he said that this initiative, like other CEC initiatives, had made possible the compilation and analysis of data on toxics release for the three countries. He also noted that the state-of-the-environment report had contributed to a better understanding of the impact of NAFTA on the

environment and increased the level of information for decision-makers. He also mentioned how empirical evidence had shown the impact of trade liberalization on the environment and how the implementation of NAFTA had not resulted in a “race to the bottom” nor to the creation of pollution havens. He noted that, from 2003 to 2008, Mexico had improved its environmental infrastructure and increased its budget for the environment by 80%. In regard to Mr. Schott’s comment on climate change, Administrator Johnson echoed Minister Baird’s remarks and stated that, notwithstanding the importance of the issue, countries had a responsibility to consider the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the appropriate forum for discussions on this matter. At the same time, he sees complementing activities existing within the CEC program which need to be supported, such as green building and the green suppliers’ partnership, which could favorably affect the environment and, more particularly, climate change.

Focusing her talk on the topic of climate change, Minister Beauchamp recognized the efforts undertaken at the international scale under the United Nations umbrella but also pointed out the existence of national and regional initiatives aimed at achieving shorter-term objectives to fight climate change. She supported the idea of the CEC’s having a complementary role to play in this global endeavor.

Item 5.1 Conserving North America’s biodiversity

Item 5.1.1 Protecting marine ecosystems

Gary Davis, former National Park Service, Water Resources Division Branch Chief for Ocean and Coastal Resources, was invited by Minister Baird to highlight progress under this initiative. Mr. Davis provided a brief report on a functional network of marine-protected areas that he considers at the cutting edge of biodiversity conservation and which features, at its core, the engagement of local communities and the use of scorecards to improve our common understanding of biodiversity. (A complementary presentation can be found at:

http://www.cec.org/files/council2008/english/NAMPAN_Council.ppt).

Secretary Elvira expressed support for the continuation and expansion of this network as a means to pursue the leadership role of the CEC in protecting marine ecosystems in North America. He also pointed to domestic efforts in Mexico expressed through the creation of an inter-ministerial committee to coordinate oceans and coastal efforts. He pointed to assessments and gap analyses on endangered species conducted in 2007 which assisted Mexico in prioritizing habitats for conservation. He indicated that the results of these analyses were integrated into the work of the CEC. In this regard, he noted the opportunity for building trilateral cooperative efforts on domestic undertakings.

Administrator Johnson thanked the presenter and commended him as well as Canada, Mexico and the United States’ National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for their collaboration under this initiative and indicated he looked forward to the report on the state of marine biodiversity in Marine Protected Areas in the Baja-to-Bering region, being prepared this year. He underlined the importance of cooperative actions in preserving the health of the oceans and noted that this was one of the highest priorities for the United States. He also echoed Mexico’s comments on the positive outcomes of engaging local communities, as well on the expansion of this project elsewhere in North America.

Having also expressed much support and appreciation for this endeavor on behalf of Canada, Minister Baird invited his counterparts to vote in favor of a Council Resolution supporting continued trilateral cooperation to protect marine biodiversity by working together to foster an effective North American marine protected areas network. Council thus adopted Resolution 08-05.

Item 5.1.2 Conserving the monarch butterfly

The Chair invited Ernesto Enkerlin, president of Semarnat's *Comision Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas* (Conanp—National Commission for Protected Natural Areas), to provide a progress report on this initiative set forth during the 2007 Council session. (A complementary presentation can be found at: http://www.cec.org/files/council2008/english/Monarch_Council.ppt).

Minister Baird thanked the presenter and commented that the monarch butterfly represented the best example of a shared environment and underscored the impressive work conducted by the three countries towards its protection.

Administrator Johnson commended the Secretariat and the government representatives for the time and energy spent in putting together the North American Monarch Conservation Plan (NAMCP). He assessed the report as very thoughtful and noted how it represented a long history of research and cooperation to identify the challenges and opportunities to assist decision-makers. He indicated he looked forward to the joint CEC–World Wildlife Fund (WWF) assessment, which will provide a snapshot of conservation commitments in the three countries, as well as to the monarch butterfly handbook, which will serve as a useful tool for monitoring efforts.

Secretary Elvira expressed that the federal government in Mexico as well as the governors of the states of Michoacán and México viewed the protection of the monarch butterfly as a priority. He pointed to robust surveillance efforts to fight illegal logging activities, and to the allocation of large sums towards reforestation and other conservation activities, with the active participation of indigenous communities. He noted that although illegal logging had been reduced by 80 percent, the protection of the monarch butterfly and its ecosystem required additional efforts over time. He thanked the United States and Canada for their support and regional perspective in protecting the species.

In closing, Minister Baird commended Mexico for its proactive actions in conserving the land and in protecting the monarch butterfly's sensitive ecosystem. He indicated that Environment Canada was currently developing a management plan aimed at defining what additional measures can be undertaken by the government to assist in protecting the monarch butterfly.

Item 5.2 Risk management for toxics—the new Sound Management of Chemicals (SMOC) initiative

Minister Baird called on Charles Auer, chair of the SMOC Working Group, to present a progress report on the SMOC initiative, as well as on the proposed new strategic direction for chemicals cooperation in North America, which includes the establishment of a foundation for chemicals management, the development and implementation of a sustainable regional approach to monitoring, and the reduction or elimination of the risks from chemicals. (A complementary presentation can be found at: http://www.cec.org/files/council2008/english/Sound_Management_of_Chemicals.ppt.)

Secretary Elvira recognized the cooperation among the three countries in developing the inventory of toxic substances and the action plans on mercury and lindane. He indicated that Semarnat was working closely with the *Secretaría de Salud* (Secretariat of Health) in these endeavors. He also reiterated Mexico's interest in the work carried out under the SMOC program and expressed its support for the continued transparent and participatory activities, as well as for the new approach to chemicals cooperation presented by Mr. Auer.

Administrator Johnson also expressed appreciation to the SMOC Working Group for the development of its new vision. He noted there was a high level of interest around the globe on chemicals management and that the SMOC Working Group had succeeded in providing decision-makers with baseline information and in reducing exposure to harmful chemicals in North America. He pointed to the United States' commitment to complete an initial assessment and take actions on thousands of chemicals by 2012. He emphasized the importance of the cooperation of the three countries in this area through the CEC and he expressed much support for the renewed agenda of the SMOC initiative.

Minister Baird thanked the presenter and applauded the SMOC Working Group for the progress accomplished. He commented that effective chemicals management is a priority for Canadians and pointed to Canada's chemicals management plan presented in 2006. In closing, he mentioned that the CEC's Sound Management of Chemicals initiative yielded tangible results for the environment.

Item 5.3 Eliminating environmental threats from noncompliant imports entering North America

The Chair invited Renzo Benocci of the Enforcement Working Group to provide a report on this initiative. Mr. Benocci presented to Council the action plan to enhance cross-border collaboration and the pilot project to interdict the importation of certain noncompliant engines that threaten air quality. (The complementary slide presentation can be found at:

http://www.cec.org/files/council2008/english/Noncompliant_Imports.ppt.)

Administrator Johnson thanked Mr. Benocci for his presentation and underlined the growing importance of imports safety as an issue in North America and the need to address it. He quoted Health and Human Services Secretary, Mike Leavitt, who chairs the United States Interagency Working Group on Import Safety, as saying: "In a global market, all of us have three choices: we can fight and fail, we can accept and survive, or we can lead and prosper. So, let us lead." In North America, he affirmed, we have an opportunity to lead, and he pointed out actions that are examples of leadership on this matter. Wishing success to the CEC in implementing the pilot project, he also expressed his interest in expanding the scope of activities, which could include further collaboration with customs agencies.

Secretary Elvira underscored the role of the *Procuraduría federal de protección al ambiente* (Federal Office for Environmental Protection—Profepa) in enforcing environmental laws in Mexico and encouraged collaboration between Profepa and customs agencies in the United States and Canada to eliminate threats from noncompliant imports. He commented that this emerging issue required dynamic and economic cooperation among the three countries to yield results. He noted the success achieved in 2006 when the three countries joined efforts in fighting the transmission of harmful

invasive organisms via wood packing by setting international standards. He believes that, through joint cooperation, results in this area can be achieved in a short timeframe by targeting specific groups of products and designing response mechanisms. As an example of domestic efforts, he pointed to regulations being adopted by Mexico to eliminate the threat from the import of batteries containing mercury. He stressed, however, Mexico's commitment to a trilateral strategy in this area, which would include information exchange and expert assistance from partner agencies in the United States and Canada. He indicated that the development of this strategy might facilitate the allocation of additional resources at the border by the Mexican federal government.

Minister Baird thanked the presenter and the Enforcement Working Group for this initiative and underlined how this is an area where significant progress can be achieved.

Item 6 Accelerating market-based environmental progress

Item 6.1 Green building in North America: Opportunities and challenges

Minister Baird welcomed Jonathan Westeinde and David Morillón, respectively chair and member of the Advisory Group, and asked them to present the Article 13 report on green building in North America prepared by the CEC Secretariat. They pointed out recommendations on various means to significantly enhance the market uptake of green building and to make it the standard practice for construction throughout North America. (The complementary slide presentation can be found at: http://www.cec.org/files/council2008/english/Green_building_in_NA.ppt.)

Minister Baird quoted his colleague in Parliament, Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources, who says that the biggest source of energy is the one which is wasted. Minister Baird noted how Quebec had been confronted with a unique challenge in that nearly 98% of its electricity comes from hydro-electric generation, and that it had become skilled at energy efficiency. He then invited Minister Beauchamp to make a few comments.

Minister Beauchamp commented that the presentation clearly shows how joint benefits and quick results can be obtained with green building. She senses the need to act in the short-term in order to commonly reap the benefits. Turning to Quebec, she pointed out historical choices which have made it possible to rely on renewable energy but noted that energy efficiency remains an important issue for the province. As part of Quebec's plan to fight climate change, she pointed to a robust energy efficiency program which includes measures for private homes as well as a review of the building code, to reflect sustainable building principles. A strategy has also been developed jointly with the Ministry of Natural Resources in Quebec to promote the use of wood to build public infrastructures. Finally, she supported the need for additional research investments and suggested documenting the effects of time on green buildings and looking into ways to manage these buildings over time.

Secretary Elvira thanked the presenters for bringing to the forefront the costs associated with building green homes. He pointed to the strategy announced in January 2008 by the governments of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Mexico to work jointly in promoting green buildings. In this pursuit, he indicated that Mexico viewed green building certification as a priority. He also pointed to recent investments in green mortgages resulting in important savings in carbon emissions in Mexico. In closing, he suggested that a possible next step for the CEC would be the creation of a trilateral group to promote urban development with green buildings.

Administrator Johnson thanked the presenter and commended the quality and timeliness of this report, particularly in a context where energy security is at the forefront of discussions. He stressed the need to continue investing significantly in green building. He agreed with the conclusion on leadership coming from the top and pointed out that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) uses 100 percent green energy and how LEED certification is required for all new government buildings. He also pointed to green certifications such as Energy Star and Water Sense. He shared that his administration was taking a two-pronged approach to green building: 1) promoting scientific research, and 2) greening existing buildings and private homes. Finally, he deplored that many green technologies are not accessible to many countries of the world due to tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers. He encouraged his counterparts to work with their trade colleagues to encourage the elimination of those trade barriers.

Minister Baird thanked the Secretariat and the Advisory Group for the report, which he qualified as a powerful call for action, and indicated he looked forward to further work being accomplished in this area.

Item 6.2. Greening the North American auto sector

The chair invited Steve Hellem, executive director of the Suppliers Partnership for the Environment, to present the CEC initiative involving the private sector. The presenter explained how the CEC had been promoting the creation of auto sector suppliers' partnerships in the three countries, by linking them with the existing partnership in the United States, as a means to facilitate the greening of the supply chains through a sharing of national efforts and experiences. (The complementary slide presentation can be found at:

http://www.cec.org/files/council2008/english/Auto_Suppliers_Partnerships_Presentaation.ppt.)

Minister Baird thanked the speaker and indicated he was delighted with the opportunity to see the partnership replicated in Canada, based on the successes in Mexico and in the United States.

Administrator Johnson congratulated the Suppliers Partnership for the Environment and the CEC for the progress accomplished under this initiative. He noted that the results, such as tangible amounts of chemicals reduced and energy saved, speak for themselves. He indicated he looked forward to seeing this partnership expanded across North America.

Secretary Elvira thanked the presenter and pointed to Mexico's objective to see 10,000 companies committed to greening their supply chains by 2012. Concerning the auto sector partnership, he reiterated the commitment of Mexico to work trilaterally and expressed the desire to see this effort expanded.

Minister Beauchamp echoed the congratulations and underscored the importance of bringing to the forefront the greening of the supply chains in the auto sector but also of beginning to pay attention to the final product, the automobiles. She pointed to stronger regulations endorsed in Quebec on vehicles, much like the regulations effective in California.

Item 7 Reporting on the state of the North American environment

The Chair invited Executive Director Adrián Vázquez, to present the report produced by the Secretariat on the state of the North American environment. Mr. Vázquez explained that the report addresses 14 environmental topics on a North American scale and provides an objective appraisal of environmental trends and conditions, which can inform the Council members as they begin their deliberations on the future direction of the CEC. (The complementary presentation can be found at: http://www.cec.org/files/council2008/english/State_of_Environment.ppt.)

Secretary Elvira underscored the quality of the report presented by the Secretariat. He noted, however, that the report does not cover all issues and that other opportunities for cooperation exist.

Administrator Johnson commented that the report depicts the successes but also the challenges remaining. He underlined the importance of monitoring and assessing progress in protecting the environment in order to identify priorities for the future. He indicated he looked forward to considering the issues presented as part of the discussions on the 2010–2015 Strategic Plan.

Minister Baird thanked Adrián Vázquez for his presentation and echoed comments made by his counterparts.

The following Council items were discussed in-camera

Item 8 Strategic planning

The chair invited his counterparts to present their views on key national and regional priorities and make recommendations to the Secretariat for developing the 2010–2015 Strategic Plan.

Administrator Johnson stressed that the choice of CEC priorities should follow two principles: 1) they should reflect trilateral priorities; 2) if new topical areas are selected, other topics should be discarded. He pointed out ongoing opportunities such as the green suppliers' partnership and green building which can be expanded. He underscored how these represented tangible, near-term activities producing results and assisting the three countries in fighting climate change. He also noted that, following Kobe, the three countries needed to assess how to best cooperate on biodiversity conservation. Finally, he highlighted sustainable productivity—reducing, reusing, and recycling—as a potential area of work for the CEC, given it is at the heart of many issues facing North America.

Secretary Elvira also pointed to a number of principles in developing the 2010–2015 Strategic Plan: 1) the work of the CEC should yield tangible benefits for the region; 2) JPAC's views should be sought; 3) the report on the state of the North American environment should be analyzed; 4) the implementation of the 2005–2010 Strategic Plan should be reviewed in terms of strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities; 5) what can best be accomplished jointly by the three countries should be defined; and 6) the CEC should have a leadership role, and thus regional actions could be replicated and help address global issues. Finally, he suggested that this next strategic plan represented an opportunity in as much as a responsibility for Council to propel the CEC in the right direction.

Minister Baird supported the comments expressed by his counterparts. He particularly underlined the need to focus the work of the CEC on very few priorities, suggested that initiatives be more results-focused, that they be aligned with the outcomes and that success be measurable. He expressed support

for the path forward presented by the CEC executive director. In closing, he expressed appreciation for activities such as the ones presented under green building and in greening the auto sector since they delivered tangible results that can have larger-scale impact on the environment and offer concrete results for citizens.

The executive director thanked the Council members for their thoughtful guidance. Following a brief presentation of the strategic road map and its principal milestones, he asked for Council's endorsement of the process and suggested that some of the priority items that had just been identified by Council be considered in the context of the 2009 Operational Plan.

Administrator Johnson responded that the United States supported the road map, in essence, although the timeframes identified may need to accommodate the upcoming change in the United States' administration. This note of caution received support from both Canada and Mexico.

Item 9 Final draft ministerial statement

The final draft ministerial statement was approved by the Council for its release.
(see: http://www.cec.org/pubs_docs/documents/index.cfm?varlan=english&ID=2297)

Item 10 Concluding remarks and signing of Council resolutions

The chair invited his counterparts to join him in signing the ministerial statement and the [Council resolution on protecting marine ecosystems \(08-05\)](#) and the [sound management of chemicals \(08-06\)](#). Prior to signing the documents, the Council members exchanged gifts and made a few remarks.

The Ministers proceeded to sign the resolutions.

Item 11 Joint meeting with JPAC

Following introductions by the JPAC members, Jane Gardner, JPAC chair, reported on the environmental outlook conference held the day before, particularly on the panel entitled "Continued Growth and Integration of North American Societies," where economic, social and environmental consequences of growth in the next 20 years were to be identified. She explained that the striking statistics and key factors presented showed clearly the importance of taking proactive and defensive measures. The projected outcomes she highlighted included the centralization of populations in urban areas and the increasing demand on energy and food. She pointed to the need for governments to focus efforts on energy efficiency and to work toward more efficient land use to reduce dependency on automobile.

Eduardo Rincón Mejía reported on the Outlook conference panel on global environmental change and the challenges facing North America. He reported that the concerns expressed by the panelists related to projected impacts of climate change such as extreme weather phenomena, outbreak of new diseases, and loss of biodiversity. He pointed to three areas where governments could focus their attention in dealing with these projected impacts: 1) promote renewable energy, green building and green transportation, in order to limit greenhouse gas emissions; 2) strengthen the health system of each country to face the health-related challenges ahead; and 3) promote reforestation measures and

make use of new technologies to disseminate the environmental benefits of reforestation.

Carlos Sandoval spoke on the topic of environmental competitiveness of the private sector in North America. He underscored the importance of a sustainable environment to economic growth and referred to recent data released by the World Bank indicating that environmental sustainability is among the five most important factors for competitiveness. Based on this information, Mr. Sandoval proposed that the CEC be involved in building mechanisms to improve environmental competitiveness through innovation, creativity, incentives, and market instruments. To allow the three countries of North America to benefit equally from an increase in productivity, he suggested that the CEC be involved in creating better linkages among private sector organizations to achieve a better environmental performance. He asked Council to support a workshop involving both JPAC and environmental private-sector organizations to identify regional mechanisms to increase the competitiveness and environmental performance of the private sector in North America. He invited the Council members to the next JPAC meeting, to be held in December in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico.

Gordon Lambert reported on the panel on environment security that had been held during the Outlook conference and, as a principle, pointed to the interdependency of energy, food and water. He underlined the importance of examining closely the design of our institutions, to address these multiple, interconnected issues. With respect to the current global situation with fossil fuels, it is imperative to rethink our sources of energy. In this regard, the deployment of new technologies will need to accelerate, as well as their public acceptance. He referred to the potential of plug-in hybrid vehicles, which will yield synergies between the energy systems. In addition, he mentioned the need to rethink transportation infrastructures.

With respect to food, Mr. Lambert underlined the growing demands on food globally and gave as an example China, which has a growing number of citizens entering the middle class, with aspirations for mobility, and shifting to a protein-based diet, resulting in an increased demand for feed grain.

Finally, he noted how water could become the source of potential global conflicts—thus the need to begin looking at how scarce resources are allocated.

Jean-Guy Dépôt addressed the Council on the topic of water management in North America and the foreseen effects of climate changes on reservoirs of drinking water. He pointed to the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which concluded that an increase in the available supply of freshwater in humid tropical zones is foreseen, along with a reduction in available freshwater resources and an increase in drought in the semi-arid, low-altitude zones of middle latitude regions. Predictions are that increases in yearly water flows in some regions will likely be counterbalanced by increased variability of precipitation, such as the risk of flooding and changes in the physical and biological properties of lakes and rivers, thus affecting water quality. According to a 2003 United Nations report on water quality, the planet already faces a serious problem of water shortage and this will only worsen with climate change. Consequently, Mr. Dépôt urged Council to begin looking at such issues as water conservation and the reduction of water wastage. He also referred to regulations introduced in some states and provinces to ban the use of two-stroke engines. He emphasized that not only did navigation need to be targeted but also the protection of water basins, as a precautionary principle, and that security perimeters needed to be designated. Considering that Canada

accounts for nine percent of the world's entire renewable freshwater resources, he indicated it was imperative that the three countries together protect their reservoirs of fresh drinking water. In closing, he proposed the creation of a North American network for the protection of all freshwater sources.

Ralph Marquez spoke to the Council about promoting the use of advanced air monitoring technologies to reduce emissions in North America. He began by mentioning the new advanced technologies for air monitoring which are currently under development and noted how these advances can change the way we address emission reductions because emissions are becoming detectable for the first time. To take full advantage of these technologies, he indicated it would be necessary for regulators to develop new policies that encourage their routine use by industries, without sanctions for previous unidentified emissions. He spoke about the use of infrared cameras by the state of Texas, which render volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions visible, and how this technology had proven a very useful tool to identify emissions sources from oil and gas exploration and production facilities. He credited this technology for allowing large volumes of VOC emissions to be eliminated or reduced and suggested that the three governments work on developing policies that encourage the use of such technologies and more practical policies to encourage early reductions by industries through voluntary measures. In closing, Mr. Marquez offered a CD to each minister, showing what infrared cameras found over the Houston industrial area in July 2005.

Secretary Elvira thanked JPAC for its active participation in the CEC and expressed appreciation for the topics presented. He mentioned that the proceedings from the Outlook conference will certainly assist Council in defining the next Strategic Plan. He indicated he looked forward to JPAC's involvement in this endeavor.

Administrator Johnson also thanked JPAC for its involvement and for the advice it provides. Reflecting on the three panels from the Outlook conference, he concurred with the interconnectedness of issues such as competitiveness and sustainable development and noted that the challenge the Council members faced, as ministers, was to chart a course of action that doesn't have adverse effects on other issues. He recalled that, whereas previously there were competing interests, there was now a movement towards more integration.

He noted the aging infrastructures, and communities such as indigenous peoples who are without infrastructures. He underlined the need to work towards a sustainable future to meet these needs from an energy, water and economic standpoint.

Concerning the safeguard of water supplies, he assured the public that his ministry was working hard at protecting freshwater sources.

Minister Beauchamp agreed with the interconnectedness of issues and with the need to focus efforts on sustainable issues balancing water versus energy versus economic development, as suggested by Administrator Johnson. Concerning future priorities for the CEC, she indicated that water and its interconnectedness with climate change should be explored. She reminded the participants that security issues were linked to water and that ensuring peace for the citizens was of utmost importance. She made a reference to the new Quebec law on conservation of resources, which protects the province against the use of its water by others.

Minister Beauchamp also reflected on the importance of developing technologies as a tool for changing behavior.

Minister Baird commented that he was impressed with the statistics showing the growth in the world's population, which, he felt, underscored the consequences of today's decisions. Concerning the control technologies cited by Ralph Marquez, Minister Baird referred to the measures (rules and processes) put in place by the governments to protect the environment against harm, at the same time noting the importance of fast-tracking the development of technologies and rethinking how governments interact with these technologies. He noted the current public focus on climate change and pointed out that water could also become a very important issue, hence the importance of looking closely at this matter.

Merrell Ann Phare, member of JPAC, made three comments. First, she referred to a point raised by Thomas Homer-Dixon in his keynote address during the Outlook conference. It pertained to our possible need to redefine what we mean by growth, given the growing world population and the finite amount of resources. This represents a fundamental issue we face globally. Secondly, she urged the Council to reconsider the role of the CEC in the area of climate change. Notwithstanding the fact that the United Nations remains the principal forum, she stressed that numerous, proactive actions will be required at different levels of government and society. Thirdly, she suggested that the CEC begin identifying ways to think of competitiveness in the face of requirements for adaptation. Finally, she congratulated the Council for its decisions concerning the factual records and noted how the delays had attracted so much criticism. As for the remaining decisions required by Council on SEM matters, she indicated she hoped they would be made shortly.

Minister Baird concurred that under the umbrella of the CEC it is possible to define tangible measures which assist the governments in fulfilling their international commitments such as activities in support of green building and promoting supply partnerships for the auto sector industry.

Carlos Sandoval mentioned that the next JPAC meeting will be held in December 2008, in Mexico, on the topic of environmental sustainability and competitiveness and reiterated the invitation to the governments. He noted that their involvement was also critical for the development of green building in Mexico.

Irene Henriques emphasized that everyone has a role to play in the protection of the environment and that it was important to instill this awareness in governments and citizens alike.

Item 12 Council public session

Jane Gardner, JPAC Chair, opened the public session by introducing the ministers in attendance, beginning with Administrator Stephen L. Johnson, of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Canadian Minister of the Environment John Baird, Quebec's Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks Line Beauchamp, and Mexico's Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada, from the *Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales* (Semarnat).

Ms. Gardner invited the selected representative from the networking session to present the results of the Outlook conference. However, there was no appointed representative to take the floor.

Summary of oral interventions, in order of appearance:

Common Legal Arrangements for Protected Areas in Canada, Mexico and the United States, by Ben Boer, IUCN Academy of Environmental Law, Ottawa, ON

Mr. Boer's presentation focused on the harmonization of the legal frameworks for protected areas in the three North American countries. While a great deal of work has been done on the scientific aspects of the conservation of species of common concern, that effort has not been sufficiently reflected in the legal arrangements for the protection of said species, Mr. Boer affirmed. The North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) recognizes the right of each country to set its own levels of domestic environmental protection and notes that each country shall continue to improve such environmental laws as well as their corresponding enforcement. However, he noted, the current legislation concerning protected areas in Canada, Mexico, and the United States is nationally-focused, without any particular relationship between national laws. Mr. Boer suggested that a much more holistic, integrated approach should be taken to harmonizing environmental law, particularly as it relates to protected areas. A regional instrument could incorporate common standards concerning the identification, establishment, and management of those protected areas that provide habitat for species of common concern, including transboundary and migratory species. A legal basis for such a regional instrument could be found in the provisions of the Agreement, in particular under Article 10(3). As mentioned by Mr. Boer, this suggestion flows from the framework already developed by the CEC in its North American Conservation Action Plans (NACAPs). He urged the ministers to begin thinking about the creation of such a mechanism, given the long lead time it takes to develop, negotiate and agree upon international legal instruments.

Request to integrate "greening the trade corridors" as part of CEC's work, by Francisco Conde, North America's SuperCorridor Coalition (NASCo)

Mr. Conde presented a request for Council to consider an increased programmatic commitment to the concept of "greening the trade corridors of North America." In his statement, Mr. Conde recognized CEC's work to date in greening the supply chain by establishing partnerships with the auto sector and supporting trade associations involved in increasing and improving cross-border trade. Recognizing that environmental sustainability should go hand-in-hand with increased trade and development, he noted that the trade and transportation corridors offer the perfect platform for the CEC to address trilateral environmental challenges and solutions. Among the things that NASCo does well, he said, is to coordinate and cooperate with policies from cities, counties, states and provinces. Therefore, a partnership between NASCo and the CEC would facilitate the coordination of expertise, promote best practices, and advance initiatives such as green building along the corridor.

Impact of factual records on the making and application of public policy in Mexico, by Martha María del Rayo Calderón García, Ciudadanos por el Medio Ambiente (Citizens for the Environment)

In addressing the Council, Ms. Calderón denounced the case of the Río Santiago, which receives the residual waters of the metropolitan area of Guadalajara as well as the towns of El Salto and Juanacatlán. She stressed that the lack of appropriate water treatment is having a dire impact on the health of the local residents. She quoted studies from different scientific and academic institutions, such as the *Universidad de Guadalajara* (University of Guadalajara), the Pan American Health Organization, the Montpellier Institute of France, and the *Instituto Mexicano de Tecnología del Agua* (Mexican Institute of Water Technology), among others, which report finding heavy metals in the Río Santiago waters. Heavy metals found include arsenic, cadmium, chrome, mercury, nickel and lead, as well as reactive substances to methylene blue and polychlorinated biphenyls. The presence of these substances, she said, directly affects the health of the residents, the river itself, and the related ecosystems. She cited the case of an eight year-old who fell into the river, accidentally drank water and died later from arsenic intoxication, as being the trigger for raising this matter before the CEC Council.

She urged the ministers to foster better interaction between the health ministries and Semarnat, to assist decision-makers in reducing risks for the local populations. Ms. Calderón suggested that the towns of Juanacatlán and El Salto be considered priority sites for the Monitoring and Evaluation Program (Proname), and invited the Council to reinforce its commitment to the pollutant release and transfer register and to include within CEC's 2009 Operational Plan a project to address the correlation between the pollution of the Río Santiago and the illnesses present in the children of the area.

Enabling the economic potential of rural land-use for carbon sequestration and trading, poverty alleviation and food security through agroforestry systems, by Raul Ponce, Associate Professor, Environmental Program, Trent University

Food and energy security have joined global warming and climate change at the forefront of global environmental concerns agenda, Mr. Ponce affirmed. Climate change adaptations, alternative energy generation and greenhouse gas (GHG) abatement are now the subject of major international activity and the strong inter-linkages between land-use systems, food security, agrobiodiversity conservation, the prevention of land degradation, and the production of bioenergy cannot be ignored. Mr. Ponce suggested that such inextricably complex linkages demand a systemic approach to the design and implementation of policies that address all such crosscutting issues. Said policies need to be creative, direct and effective, he said. He suggested that through the CEC it may be feasible to achieve synergies between actions and policies that tackle the mitigation of GHG through land-use changes, particularly agroforestry, while enhancing food and energy security, the conservation of biodiversity and, in particular, agrobiodiversity, and while preventing land degradation as well as assisting in the alleviation of poverty.

Review of CEC strategic planning in trade and environment, climate change, use of economic instruments, energy crisis and water issues, by Alejandro Sosa Reyes, Iniciativa GEMI, AC

According to Mr. Sosa, the world is currently going through what Bob Willard calls the “second wave towards sustainability,” in which private companies and enterprises play an active role in developing economic and market instruments and rely on productivity to motivate positive changes.

Having said this, he proposed that a number of emergent themes can be integrated as part of the CEC agenda. Such themes include trade and environment; moving towards alternative sources of energy; climate change and the use of economic instruments; water; and improving the environmental practices on market chains. From his standpoint, the CEC can assist in strengthening collaborative approaches for environmental law enforcement, to explore the feasibility of developing the more effective instruments for reducing greenhouse gases and to strengthen competitiveness in environmental performance.

Recovery of green spaces in Mexico and North America, by Patricia Canales, Fuerza Unida Emiliano Zapata en Pro de las Áreas Verdes, AC (Emiliano Zapata United Force for Green Spaces)

On behalf of the non-profit organization *Fuerza Unida*, Ms. Canales denounced the loss of green areas in the Los Remedios National Park, which encompassed 400 hectares when decreed in 1938 and which currently covers just over 100 hectares. She recognized that even though their citizen submission did not result in a factual record, it did have a positive effect when Semarnat, more specifically the *Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas* (National Commission of Protected Natural Areas—Conanp), reviewed the file and denied the permit for a real state development project within the park. Nonetheless, she expressed her disappointment in the governmental authorities who are doing little to avoid such losses at a national scale. She called for a strong commitment from the three ministers to achieving a legal instrument giving certainty that areas like this will not take second priority behind urban development.

CEC's Citizen submission process, by Albert Koehl, Ecojustice

Mr. Koehl explained that, in the perceptions of many people, trade agreements such as NAFTA come into effect to the detriment of the environment. In 1994, as a response to these detractors, the CEC was created—an organization built on principles of transparency, accountability and public participation. Central to the CEC was the citizen submission process, a mechanism that allows North American citizens to allege that a particular country is not enforcing its own environmental laws and thereby gaining a trade advantage. Mr. Koehl affirmed that the Secretariat is acting professionally, transparently and diligently, but not the Parties. He argued that when a recommendation from the Secretariat is submitted to the Council for a vote on whether or not to direct the Secretariat to prepare a factual record, the process comes to a halt and there is little access to information regarding Council negotiations on this matter. The lengthy delays in the investigation process leading to the development of a factual record are getting in the way of governments being held accountable for their failure to enforce environmental laws. He quoted the example of the US coal-fired power plants, filed in September 2004, when the Bush government was about to enter its second term. When this investigation is completed, he said, Bush's administration will be long out of office and his government will not have to account for the findings. He urged the ministers to respect the independence of the Secretariat's body of experts, to approve the preparation of factual records and release factual records within 30 days of their submission to Council.

Outlook for developing an environmental assessment of products and procurement in Mexico, based on Canadian and US approaches, by Nydia Suppen-Reynaga, Ecoetiqueta Mexicana, Centro de Análisis de Ciclo de Vida y Diseño Sustentable (CADis—Center for Life Cycle Analysis and

Sustainability Design)

Ms. Suppen-Reynaga drew the ministers' attention to the analysis of the life cycle of green products and purchases. She underlined the importance of developing a methodology that allows the evaluation of the life cycle of green products and services, as well as of designing a labeling and verification framework to strengthen consumers' reliance on these products. She mentioned that CADis, in coordination with other international organizations, has been successfully developing an eco-certification project that takes into consideration the life cycles of products. She proposed using CEC's experience to create stronger linkages and achieve integration with similar projects in Canada and the United States. She invited the CEC to continue to be a platform for generating information, including databases, inventories, criteria for green purchasing, and analysis on the environmental impact of products.

Proposed strategy for creating synergies between the CEC and the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC-COCEF) on common issues, by José Carmelo Zavala, CIGA, AC

The Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) invited the CEC Council to join in mutual involvement on issues of common concern, such as the Colorado River basin and the border fence between Mexico and the United States. Mr. Zavala emphasized that, with increased economic and trade relations between the countries, there should be better communication and negotiations to avoid resorting to building barriers. He invited the ministers to maintain open channels for bilateral collaboration in order to achieve sustainable development in the region while promoting the participation of local actors.

Replies from the Council members

Secretary Juan R. Elvira Quesada said that the Mexican government continues to make every effort to create space for public participation and to increase its accountability and transparency, citing this public session as one example where specific issues can be brought forward. Mr. Quesada pointed out that Semarnat now has a program for sustainable development in 31 states and the *Distrito Federal*, which demonstrates the willingness of the government to move toward practices better for the environment. He mentioned that the government is working on the contaminated river in Jalisco and that many agencies are involved in trying to find a solution to this complex problem.

Canadian Environment Minister John Baird began by addressing Mr. Boer's presentation, acknowledging the important role that protected areas play in safeguarding sensitive ecosystems, and expressed Canada's interest in continuing to strengthen this line of work in both land and marine environments. With respect to the presentation from Ms. Calderón García, Minister Baird acknowledged the challenge of eliminating pollutants and toxics and noted that the governments should remain vigilant about the harmful relationship between these chemicals and human health. Mr. Baird welcomed Raul Ponce's comments on climate change and stressed that no more conferences or forums are needed to discuss climate change, stating that Canada is interested in specific actions that will lead to specific results. Minister Baird commented on the environmental labeling presentation and assured the audience of the governments' concern with human health, citing the example of imported children's toys containing lead paint. He pointed to the growing

demand for reliable information that will allow the public to make more-informed decisions. Ensuring that the labeled products comply with real standards is of utmost importance, he said. Mr. Baird concluded by thanking the public for their presentations and for their successful meeting with JPAC.

US EPA Administrator M. Stephen L. Johnson thanked the speakers for their time and thoughtful presentations. He acknowledged the importance of the Conservation Action Plans and the opportunities that exist for harmonization of environmental laws while recognizing the issue of national sovereignty, and the need for common but differentiated responses depending on the case at hand. One example, he said, was provided earlier during the Baja-to-Bering presentation, in which area the three countries are finding common approaches to protect the marine environment across the borders. He stated that the US is interested in continuing to explore these approaches and opportunities. He recognized that work on greening the trade corridors, supply chains and infrastructure is more advanced than the work on greening the transportation corridors. He acknowledged that this is a well-embraced concept that needs more discussion. Regarding the presentation on factual records, he corroborated the Parties' responsibilities for transparency and accountability, as well as diligence in evaluating what is presented to them. He emphasized that factual records contain complex issues that require careful consideration; however, he agreed that there is room for improvement. With respect to climate change, the EPA Administrator reiterated the US interest in turning vision into tangible environmental results—more specifically, he said, the US is interested in exploring opportunities related to agroforestry and renewable energies. Mr. Johnson also recognized the importance of the life-cycle analysis and stated that the US, through the Energy Independence and Security Act, is developing a renewable fuel standard and, as part of that process, the EPA is charged with conducting the corresponding life-cycle analysis. He noted that a number of states and organizations are addressing life-cycle analysis as well. With regard to green labeling, Mr. Johnson stated that it is very important to ensure that when goods and services are labeled “green” they indeed meet all the necessary requirements. He affirmed that this represents an important economic opportunity for the business community.

Quebec's Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks, Line Beauchamp, commented on the importance of protected areas and reiterated Quebec's interest in cooperative work on this issue, particularly to better understand the legal arrangements between protected areas in Quebec and in other North American states/provinces. She commended the CEC for expanding its North American Marine Protected Areas Network to include the Atlantic coast. The notion of open corridors is also of great interest to Quebec, she said. On climate change, Minister Beauchamp recognized there are many opportunities related to biomass energy and in agroforestry. She noted that Quebec will invest C\$100 million to move to biomass energy, emphasizing that this represents not only environmental but also economic opportunities.

Closing remarks

US EPA Administrator M. Stephen L. Johnson thanked the Canadian government for hosting the event and the City of Ottawa for its hospitality. He thanked fellow Minister John Baird, Secretary Juan R. Elvira Quesada and Quebec's Environment Minister, Line Beauchamp. He also thanked both Jane Gardner of JPAC and CEC Executive Director Vázquez Gálvez for their leadership. These annual meetings provide an opportunity for the three countries to address shared environmental challenges, he said. Environmental agencies in Canada, Mexico and the United

States have a long-standing relationship and, over the course of these two days, they came together again in support of closer cooperation. By working together, in the CEC context, these three nations can become stronger allies and move together toward a cleaner, healthier future. He reiterated the United States' commitment to collaborating on a regional basis. He took the opportunity to underline that the CEC's Strategic Plan 2010–2015 must reflect the priorities of the three NAFTA partners, and set a way forward that will guarantee the continued relevance of the CEC to the three Parties, serving as a catalyst for combining national priorities, and discerning a regional agenda. These new priorities, he said, will incorporate the principles of resource productivity, such as reduce, re-use and recycle, and the conservation of biological diversity. He announced it was now the turn of the United States to take over the chairmanship of Council and host the 2009 Council meeting. Administrator Johnson stated that even though he will not be there, he will continue to be a forceful ally and an eager representative for the North American agenda through January 2009.

Canadian Environment Minister John Baird thanked the public and Jane Gardner for her leadership, as well as Executive Director Vázquez Gálvez and the CEC team for their work. He acknowledged that these meetings serve as an opportunity to collaborate, to listen to the public's concerns and to seek better environmental policies. He stated that Canada is looking forward to the CEC's Strategic Plan. He concluded by thanking Minister Line Beauchamp for her active participation in this meeting and his fellow colleagues from the United States and Mexico, US EPA Administrator M. Stephen L. Johnson and Secretary Juan R. Elvira Quesada.

Quebec's Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks, Line Beauchamp, expressed appreciation for being be part of this regional work and stressed Quebec's interest in working towards sustainable development while improving the prosperity of the North American people. She thanked her colleague, Minister Baird, for giving Quebec the opportunity to be at this table and thanked the United States and Mexican Council members as well as the CEC Secretariat for its work.

Secretary Juan R. Elvira Quesada thanked the government of Canada and the CEC staff. He noted Quebec's contribution and thanked Minister Beauchamp for her participation. Secretary Elvira expressed gratitude for Canada's hospitality and assured the new Council Chair of Mexico's support. He acknowledged and thanked the open participation of JPAC, and said that this meeting had provided many tangible results for Mexico.

Adrián Vázquez Gálvez, CEC Executive Director, congratulated Minister Baird and his team for organizing the event and thanked the Council members for their continued support. Mr. Vázquez emphasized what a privilege it was to work with the team of professionals at the Secretariat, the Council members and their teams, including the GSC, the Alternate Representatives and the various working groups who make the work of the CEC possible.

Jane Gardner, JPAC Chair, concluded by thanking the interpreters for their hard work over the last two days. She thanked the Council members for their time, attention and contributions. Lastly, Ms. Gardner expressed her gratitude to Adrián Vázquez Gálvez, the CEC staff and Marcela Orozco, JPAC's liaison officer.

Session adjourned.