

TWENTY-SIXTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE CEC COUNCIL
24–25 June 2019
Mexico City, Mexico

2019 CEC COUNCIL PUBLIC SESSION – SUMMARY RECORD

Item 5 - Welcoming remarks and introduction of video on CEC’s accomplishments of OP 2017-2018

César Rafael Chávez, CEC Executive Director, opened the meeting by welcoming the public and highlighting the theme for the public session focused on circular economy and resource efficiency.

Mr. Chávez invited to the stage the CEC Council representatives, Isabelle Bérard, Assistant Deputy Minister of International Affairs at Environment and Climate Change Canada, representing Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, María Amparo Martínez Arroyo, Director General of the National Institute for Ecology and Climate Change at *Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales* (Semarnat), representing Víctor Manuel Toledo, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, and Andrew Wheeler, Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency. The Executive Director then introduced a short video featuring key CEC projects and accomplishments under the OP 2017–2018.

Item 6 - Progress Report on Oklahoma Initiatives

Following a short introduction by CEC Executive Director on the genesis of initiatives launched during the 2018 Session in Oklahoma City, Dr. Zafar Adeel, Executive Director of the Pacific Water Research Centre at Simon Fraser University, presented a progress update on the extreme events initiative on behalf of the North American Extreme Events Advisory Group. After highlighting the overall objectives of this initiative, Dr. Adeel gave a brief overview of the activities and emphasized the added value of trilateral cooperation on this issue. He ended his presentation by listing the following anticipated impacts of the initiative by 2022: 1) enhanced citizen engagement in monitoring networks; 2) the incorporation of flood-costing methodology in planning for community resilience; 3) the use by communities/regions of the most suitable drought data and information; and 4) enhanced capacity of local and regional emergency managers.

Following this presentation, Dr. Miguel Ángel Santinelli Ramos, Director of the Faculty of Social Responsibility at the University of Anáhuac, briefly presented an update on the North American Innovation Hubs Network initiative, which aims to bring universities in Canada, Mexico, and the United States together to develop and enhance innovation hubs that provide a resource for youth and communities in terms of innovation and entrepreneurship for green growth.

The Council representatives then commented on the two initiatives. On behalf of Mexico, Ms. Martínez highlighted the importance of the work for her country that is relatively vulnerable to

extreme weather events. She stressed the critical importance of developing capabilities with communities, proper response and be better prepared for these events while also learning and sharing knowledge with these communities when transferring trinal and national capabilities at the local level. Administrator Wheeler thanked Dr. Adeel and Dr. Santinelli for their presentations and expressed his appreciation for the creation of tangible projects from these initiatives that originated in Oklahoma City in 2018. On behalf of Canada, Ms. Bérard also expressed her appreciation for the progress made and highlighted the importance of bringing together the research and development activities in North American academic institutions, innovation, and community engagement through these initiatives.

Item 7 - Youth engagement in the CEC

César Rafael Chávez provided a description of the CEC's Third Youth Innovation Challenge that called for North American youth to submit innovative solutions for improving both the environment and the economy in North America. The Challenge received about 150 submissions and nine semifinalists were asked to develop their ideas into full proposals. Mr. Chávez introduced the winners and asked them to join the Council members on stage: Daniel Gonzalez and Noor-ur-Rahman Shaikh from Canada for their project "IXIM - Using your waste to create change!"; Daniel Luna López, Omar Venancio Sánchez Animas, and Andrés Gutiérrez Castillo from Mexico for their project "Animal nutrition through transformation of organic waste"; and Adam Stager, Ray Zayas, and Vishnu Somasundaram from the United States for "A non-chemical alternative to pesticides for strawberry farms".

Mr. Chávez announced that each winning team will receive \$5,000 Canadian dollars, and asked Dr. Miguel Ángel Santinelli Ramos to describe the workshop with the winners that took place at the University of Anáhuac on 24 June.

Daniel Gonzalez presented IXIM, which involves manufacturing low-carbon construction bricks using local agricultural residues that are normally incinerated and a natural binder from the aquaculture industry. The material also has the advantage of being compostable at the end of its useful life.

Daniel Luna presented INAGROSS, which is an animal feed made of avocado agricultural waste, discarded eggshell waste and insects. The product made of organic waste is an ecological alternative for the livestock industry to reduce the environmental impact of the end product.

Adam Stager presented a solution from TRIC Robotics, a system that uses ultraviolet UV-C light to kill pathogens instead of using a chemical pesticide. The system is mobile and moves in the field in a way similar to a robot vacuum. The system could be powered with solar panels.

After the three presentations, each Council representative commented on the projects and shared their ideas on how innovation hubs can help advance innovation and green growth by cultivating the next generation of leaders and innovators. Ms. Bérard applauded the winners for their creativity and their determination. Ms. Martínez thanked the winners for their presentations and their ideas that tackle important problems in society and found encouraging youth involvement in this regard. Administrator Wheeler also applauded the winners' entrepreneurship spirit and

indicated he was impressed by the innovative ideas for reducing food waste and the use of pesticides.

Item 8 - Dialogue with the Council on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency

Sabaa Khan, the 2019 JPAC Chair, opened the dialogue by giving a brief summary of the format of the session and explaining the protocol for the discussion, including the different ways the public could engage. Ms. Khan then presented the three experts participating in that session: Chever Voltmer, Director for Plastics Initiatives at Ocean Conservancy, Gustavo Pérez Berlanga, Senior Vice President for Sustainability for Toks Restaurants, and Carolina Seward, Senior Policy Analyst on Circular Economy for Environment and Climate Change Canada. The JPAC Chair invited the Council representatives to express their views on the challenges and opportunities related to circular economy and resource efficiency in North America.

After acknowledging that Canada will be hosting the next World Circular Economy Forum, Ms. Bérard mentioned that in Canada the concept of circular economy often involves discussions on the challenge to reduce the use of plastics and the optimization of waste management. She highlighted the important role of provinces and municipalities in Canada in working towards a circular economy, and highlighted the adoption by Canada of the Ocean Plastics Charter, which includes commitments directly related to the circular economy. Finally, Ms. Bérard highlighted the Canada-wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste.

Ms. Martínez indicated that in the case of Mexico the recycling industry is an important component of the circular economy. She added that waste management in Mexico can be a challenge especially in terms of legal framework and enforcement. Another important challenge she mentioned is the need to coordinate multiple industry sectors to create a circular economy; hence a proposed national zero-waste vision for comprehensive waste management.

Administrator Wheeler referred to the US EPA's Recycling Summit of November 2018, which focused on the current issues facing the recycling industry, a critical component of resource efficiency. At this summit, key industry stakeholders signed a pledge to work with the US EPA on four actions items: 1) developing effective outreach and education strategies, 2) upgrading and modernizing the national recycling infrastructure, 3) developing secondary markets for recycling materials, 4) standardizing and aligning measurements and tracking of recyclable materials. Administrator Wheeler also highlighted the link between recycling and other environmental issues such as marine litter and food waste. Among other initiatives, he mentioned the provisions to prevent and reduce marine litter included in the new United States – Mexico – Canada Agreement (USMCA).

The following questions were asked by Sabaa Khan (acting as moderator) to the Council representatives and invited experts:

- *What are your country and institutions approaches to a circular economy?*
- *What are the main challenges and opportunities in a North American environmental trilateral context?*

Carolina Seward from ECCC indicated that circular economy is an emerging concept/issue in Canada; consequently, one of the first things to do is to understand and characterize existing waste. This task is particularly important since, from a circular economy perspective, it is key to reuse waste and rethink existing processes. Ms. Seward indicated that existing initiatives like the Youth Innovation Challenge is an opportunity for local innovation and experimentation to learn on what is doable, replicable and scalable. She also mentioned that given North America's integrated economy and supply chains, it is important to assess where circular economy business models could be applied.

- *Why is addressing food loss and waste an important circular economy and resource efficiency challenge domestically and regionally?*

After introducing himself, Gustavo Pérez Berlanga from Toks Restaurants indicated that one of the challenges they face is that a company is not necessarily the single entity engaged with the consumer. It all depends on how close the company is to the final consumer as well as its size. This leads to different solutions according to the availability of resources. Mr. Berlanga also highlighted the importance for consumers to take responsibility for their consumption habits.

- *What is the importance of addressing marine litter in a circular economy & resource efficiency strategy both domestically and regionally?*

Chever Voltmer from Ocean Conservancy highlighted the approach of her organization that includes a science-based understanding of the magnitude and origins of the problem through independent research. Ms. Voltmer also indicated that since waste management is not a profitable industry, this restricts in some areas the ability to adequately manage waste due to a lack of economic resources. She also mentioned that the problem of marine litter needs cooperation at all levels and requires everyone to take ownership of their responsibility as part of the problem.

- *What are the main challenges and opportunities related to recycling and waste management for governments in the North American context?*

On behalf of Canada, Ms. Bérard highlighted again some initiatives in Canada such as the Strategy on Zero-Plastics Waste; the Canadian Minerals and Metals Plan, which envisions a circular economy where mine wastes are transformed into useful products; the Canadian Forest Bioeconomy Framework, which includes circular concepts; and the Circular Economy Leadership Coalition, which works with large corporations to assess how these corporations can work together with governments to better manage waste. She also pointed to the City of Vancouver that has set a goal of 50% solid waste reduction by 2020, increasing to 100% in 2040.

Carolina Seward from ECCC indicated that due to the fragmented waste management system in Canada (e.g. each municipality can be managing its waste differently), there is a need to create standards harmonization for the benefit of both the industry and consumers. The creation of common baseline knowledge across the country is part of the Zero Plastic Waste Strategy mentioned earlier.

On behalf of Mexico, Ms. Martínez highlighted the importance of inter-municipal partnerships for the management of waste in order to assist smaller municipalities that have a lower management capacity. She also underlined the importance of managing plastic waste, especially considering the long coastlines of Mexico and the importance of reducing marine litter. Ms. Martínez also mentioned the need to assess water use in the production of food since food waste also equals water waste.

Administrator Wheeler stressed the need for a holistic approach in both the recycling and food waste industries. He highlighted the critical importance of finding secondary markets for recycling, especially in consideration of losing previous international markets. He also expressed the need to minimize food waste along the food supply chain by ensuring that food fit for consumption is used by humans first before being sent to animals, then to composting, and then for energy production instead of sending it to landfills.

- *What are particular examples of holistic approaches and success stories in your specific sector?*

Chever Voltmer from Ocean Conservancy mentioned the current efforts undertaken by large industries like Coca-Cola and their subsidiaries in Latin America to recycle food-grade polyethylene (PET), which is used in plastic bottles. Ms. Voltmer indicated that each success story is different; therefore, it is important to collect success stories and understand their specificities in order to understand how they could be replicated and scaled in other areas. She also mentioned opportunities to work at the source of some transboundary problems (e.g. Assessing the upstream situation on the Tijuana River Valley to minimize pollution downstream, in California).

Gustavo Pérez Berlanga from Toks Restaurants highlighted the need to understand that specific operating processes might not necessarily work elsewhere due to different business models; hence the need to understand the key aspects of success stories for better replicability. Mr. Berlanga also reiterated the importance for both the industry and consumers to take ownership of the problem of food (and plastic) waste.

- *(Question from the public) What are examples of ongoing efforts at the subnational level to address marine litter and food loss and waste? How can government actions in conjunction with civil society contribute to these efforts through local/regional actions?*

Chever Voltmer indicated that based on her experience in the Philippines, what makes zero waste/litter reduction works in some areas more than others is often political will and leadership, with a commitment to make things happen.

Ms. Bérard agreed and indicated that both governments and citizens' will is needed to create change. She highlighted that the CEC is a good "enabler" that brings together different stakeholders together to facilitate change. She then asked a public participant, a representative from the Government of Quebec, to provide a subnational perspective on the topic of circular economy.

David Ruiz, First Counsellor from the General Delegation of Quebec in Mexico, highlighted the following initiatives of the Province of Quebec: 1) a governmental strategy for sustainable development in line with commitments towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); 2) an NGO from Quebec called "La Table des Chefs" that distributes excess food to people in need while at the same time reducing food loss and waste; and 3) the waste management plan of the province that includes reducing single-use plastics and increase responsibility and ownership of plastic producers.

- *(Question from the public) How do you apply circular economy in the service sector and tourism in general?*

Gustavo Pérez Berlanga indicated there are many opportunities in the tourism industry to implement a circular economy; however he noted that this industry is managed in a relatively traditional manner. He added that fortunately there is a growing demand for more sustainable tourism. He cautioned however that in regions with high poverty rates, sustainability is not a priority, hence the need to also give consideration to poverty issues. He proposed to use a success story where a community had a sustainability vision for its tourism industry and use this story as a case study to assess how it could be applied in other regions.

- *(Online question) Can you describe any coordination efforts between environmental and trade ministries of the Parties to foster and strengthen circular economy partnerships?*

Administrator Wheeler highlighted the work of the three countries in negotiating the new trade agreement, which involved direct coordination between the trade and environmental agencies and resulted in environmental provisions in the trade agreement itself. He pointed out provisions on marine litter that are included and that represent a very important issue for the tourism industry.

Ms. Martínez indicated that Semarnat often works with the Secretariat of Agriculture when assessing organic and food waste from the tourism industry. A representative from the Secretariat of Agriculture added that in terms of waste management the agency often works with other agencies (e.g. urban development and tourism, trade, enforcement) to ensure they undertake an inter-sectorial assessment when dealing with environmental and social issues of pesticides, food security, organic waste, food loss and waste, etc.

Ms. Bérard confirmed that both the ministries of environment and trade cooperated during the negotiations around the new trade agreement.

Item 9 - Council Announcements

Administrator Wheeler announced the launch of the EcoInnovation Network that will facilitate the creation of innovation centers across North America with a focus on innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable growth through the sharing of resources and capacity for youth and communities. He listed the Network's founding members and invited them to stand when named. The founding members were applauded by the audience.

Ms. Bérard announced the approval of the 2019-2020 Operational Plan of the CEC as well as the four priority areas: 1) circular economy and resource efficiency, 2) community adaptation, resilience, and improved air quality, 3) conservation of species and ecosystems, and 4) engaging Tribes/First Nations/Indigenous communities.

Ms. Martínez announced a new iteration of the NAPECA grants program for 2019, which supports sustainability projects and engages the public and communities. She mentioned that the 2019 Call for Proposals will be seeking initiatives that focus on enhancing the capacity of communities to prepare, respond and adapt to extreme weather events.

The three Council representatives moved to the signature table and signed the Council Statement.

Item 10 - Closing remarks by the United States

Administrator Wheeler thanked Mexico as the chair of the current Council session and for a successful event and celebration of the 25th anniversary of the CEC. He also thanked Canada's representative, as well as the CEC Secretariat and JPAC members for their involvement in ensuring productive trilateral collaboration. He also highlighted the tangible results and outcomes of the initiatives stemming from last year's session in Oklahoma City, and indicated he looked forward to the EcoInnovation Network to cultivate youth leadership in innovation. Finally, he mentioned he also looked forward to a modernization of the trilateral collaboration based on the past 25 years and indicated he was hopeful for another 25 years of collaboration. In closing, he pointed out the abundance in North America of both natural and human resources, and assured of the United States' willingness to collaborate with Canada and Mexico to create common sense solutions to current North American environmental challenges.

Item 11 - Concluding remarks and Passing the Baton by Mexico

Following an exchange of gifts, Ms. Martínez shared that Mexico was pleased with the collaboration efforts between the three countries and for having hosted the Council session. She also stressed the importance of the JPAC as a model for public participation. Finally, she mentioned the common aspirational goal of the three countries of creating a North American region free of pollution. With these comments, Ms. Martínez turned the chairmanship to Canada.

Item 12 - Closing remarks by Canada

Ms. Bérard thanked Mexico for organizing the Council Session and her counterparts for their active participation. She shared that Canada was eager to work on establishing new strategic direction for the CEC. She also thanked the JPAC members for their participation and for representing the views of the public, as well as the TEKEG members for ensuring that indigenous values are properly considered in the activities of the CEC. Finally, she thanked the CEC Executive Director for his leadership and dedication over the past three years and offered him a gift. She announced that the location of next year's Council Session will be Vancouver, British Columbia, and that she looks forward to a great meeting in Canada in 2020.

The Council Session was adjourned.