

TWENTY-SEVENTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE CEC COUNCIL
26 June 2020
Online

COUNCIL PUBLIC SESSION – SUMMARY RECORD

Introductory remarks

Robert Varney, JPAC Chair, opened the meeting by welcoming the public and presenting the theme of the session, then turning to Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change at Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC).

Live from North Vancouver, British Columbia, Minister Wilkinson acknowledged the location on the traditional ancestral territory of the Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish First Nations. He then highlighted the importance of public participation in the CEC's annual Council Session, particularly during the current situation where most events are occurring online. Minister Wilkinson also stressed Canada's ongoing commitment to environmental cooperation through the CEC and recognized the importance of innovation and partnerships in clean technologies to tackle environmental challenges. He concluded by stating that 2020 is a transformative year for the CEC considering the new trade agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States.

US EPA's Administrator Andrew Wheeler expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to meet virtually, and highlighted the 50th anniversary of the US EPA. He also highlighted the strong and enforceable environmental provisions incorporated in the new trade agreement among the three countries and concluded by reaffirming the commitment of the United States to working in close collaboration with Canada and Mexico and their full support for the environmental protection aspects of this new trade agreement.

Mexico's Alternate Representative Rodolfo Godinez Rosales, on behalf of Secretary Victor Toledo Manzur, shared his reflections and emphasized the need for the environmental provisions embedded in the new trade agreement to be seen as a means to create synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and facilitate their implementation. These environmental provisions must also respect human rights and promote a healthy environment that is based on the legacy of the last 25 years of the CEC, and that is now being shared with younger generations, he said. He also highlighted the importance of the engagement of citizens and local governments in the implementation of the CEC activities under the new strategic plan, including youth and Indigenous peoples.

CEC Organizational video

After highlighting the high level of public participation in the JPAC's morning event, the JPAC Chair invited the CEC Executive Director, Richard A. Morgan, to say a few words and introduce the CEC organizational video.

The Executive Director highlighted the new trade agreement as a renewed commitment for further environmental cooperation through the CEC and introduced the video as an example of this commitment and as an introduction to the CEC for the benefit of newcomers.

Dialogue on Clean Technology for Resilient Communities

The JPAC Chair introduced Deborah Harford, the keynote speaker.

Deborah Harford, Executive Director of the Adaptation to Climate Change Team (ACT) from the Faculty of Environment of Simon Fraser University (SFU), presented her work. She highlighted the study that SFU carried out for the CEC on flood costing and ACT's work with ECCC on flood resilience. She underlined the central importance of working with communities to operationalize low carbon solutions that truly benefit them, and also highlighted the need to look at climate actions and opportunities that reinforce each other. Following a presentation of examples of clean technologies building carbon resilience for communities, she concluded her presentation with a summary of key recommendations to advance low-carbon resilience. (See attached presentation)

The JPAC Chair then invited Amparo Martínez Arroyo, General Director of the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change of Mexico (*Instituto Nacional de Ecología y Cambio Climático*, INECC) to present an initiative in Mexico. After highlighting that Mexico has climate change legislation to promote public policies, Ms. Martínez Arroyo presented a government initiative in Mexico demonstrating community resilience on the use of technologies through an ecosystem-based adaptation approach that integrates social and gender considerations. The initiative promotes rainwater harvesting and the use of a purification system in primary schools for human use and consumption. (See attached presentation)

The JPAC Chair then introduced Alejandra Castrodad, the Executive Director of Resilient Power Puerto Rico who presented a NAPECA project on solar energy for local adaptation empowerment. After thanking the CEC and the ministers for the invitation, she presented the context of Puerto Rico which has already been heavily impacted by climate change. After sharing that the mission of Resilient Power Puerto Rico is to reduce climate vulnerabilities and social inequalities, she highlighted the positive impact of using microgrids solar energy in communities in Puerto Rico. (See attached presentation)

The JPAC Chair introduced the moderator for the Q&A session, Ms. Carol-Ann Brown, Vice President, Innovation and Cleantech, GLOBE Series and The Delphi Group.

After highlighting the importance of clean technologies, Ms. Brown introduced the format of the Q&A segment. She then proceeded to pose to the ministers and invited speakers the questions received from the public:

Question #1 – What are some of the interesting examples of clean technology that will support community adaptation?

Minister Wilkinson highlighted that clean technologies has a much broader focus than the usual focus on renewable energies, including technologies related to water, landfills, pollution and other technologies to protect nature. He also mentioned that although most technologies focus on the mitigation aspect (e.g. greenhouse gases), some of them also concentrate on resilience and adaptation to change, such as water-related and satellite technologies, as well as technologies to improve the management of extreme weather events. Finally, he mentioned new ways of designing and building structures (e.g. in regions where permafrost is melting).

Question #2 – What is the role of governments at the federal level particularly to support resiliency in communities?

Administrator Wheeler reminded the audience that every form of energy technologies has some form of negative aspect that needs to be taken into account. He highlighted that the EPA is working with FEMA

in the case of extreme weather events in rebuilding communities to be stronger in facing such events in the future. He also highlighted the creation of tax incentives under the President's opportunity zones program to promote private sector investment in low-income and disadvantage communities, and to develop clean technologies further.

Question #3 – How can the CEC help increase the involvement of youth in its cooperative projects and which initiatives are being considered?

Mexico's Alternate Representative Rodolfo Godinez Rosales indicated that youth is at the core of environmental cooperation, especially considering the urgent need to change the ways in which our societies produce and consume goods. Youth have new ideas and are designing new ways to confront unsustainable production and consumption, he said. Mr. Godinez Rosales also mentioned the existence of projects at SEMARNAT and under other Mexican ministries involving youth cooperation.

Question #4 – Considering that half of emissions are coming from the industry sector, should this demand that they take key actions specifically on electricity and transportation to support the sustainability and resilience of communities consuming these services?

Administrator Wheeler highlighted current emission regulations in the United States for both the automotive and power plant sectors as well as the need to have a more global approach to ensure the cleaner use of technologies and all energy sources.

Minister Wilkinson added the importance of increasing the energy efficiency of internal combustion engines in transportation as well as the need to convert to zero-emission vehicles, either electric or using other technologies. He also highlighted the potential of hydrogen as an energy source for transportation, for example in the heavy duty vehicle industry.

Question #5 – How does solar energy remove barriers and increase access to the tools and services for underserved communities?

Alejandra Castrodad stressed the importance of having community-based solar energy resources to help communities define their own vision of resilience and internalize the benefits and savings of a micro-grid energy system that can be reinjected into their community.

Question #6 – Considering energy strategies developed by Japan, South Korea, and Europe related to the use of hydrogen, how can North America include as well a strategy on hydrogen in our set of solutions to reduce emissions?

Minister Wilkinson highlighted the high importance of hydrogen as an energy source that can be used alongside electrification of transportation to reduce emissions. He also mentioned the potential of hydrogen to be used in the industry for steelmaking and in buildings for heating. Finally, he suggested that a strategy on hydrogen could be an opportunity for North America to exploit its fossil fuel resources in a non-carbon intensive manner.

Question #7 – How do federal governments address the vulnerability of Indigenous communities to extreme weather events?

Amparo Martinez highlighted the importance of the cultural aspect (and its diversity) and that the implementation of clean technologies needs to adapt to the cultural reality and characteristics of the different regions. She indicated that Mexico created a vulnerability atlas at the local/municipal level to help determine which technologies could be best applied to a specific situation.

Carol-Ann Brown concluded the discussion segment by thanking the public and all participants.

Fourth Youth Innovation Challenge

The JPAC Chair invited the CEC Executive Director to introduce the Fourth Youth Innovation Challenge and announce the three winners. The Executive Director highlighted the Youth Innovation Challenge as a great example of youth engagement in the activities of the CEC. After presenting this year's theme, "Social Entrepreneurship for Environmental Sustainability", and reinforcing the crucial role of innovation in supporting sustainable development in North American communities, he highlighted that this year the three winning submissions were led by women. He then presented the three winners:

Mexico: **Karime Guillen Libien**

- **NoPlastic** is an innovative 100% biodegradable compostable bioplastic, based on nopal cactus and agro-industrial fruit waste.

Canada: **Monique Chan**

- **Bruized** is a women-run food enterprise created from a passion project to combat food waste through education and yummy eats.

United States: **Ciara May**

- **Rebundle** is a plant-based synthetic hair brand that eliminates skin rashes and single-use waste.

The three winners then presented their winning solutions in that same order, focusing on the challenge they are trying to address, a description of their solution along with information on its scalability, feasibility, innovative, and impactful aspects. Following their presentations, the JPAC Chair turned to the Council members for their comments.

Mexico's Alternate Representative Rodolfo Godinez Rosales thanked Karime for her NoPlastic solution. He highlighted the need to change consumption habits towards plastic especially in consideration of the problem of marine litter. In relation to Bruized, he indicated the evidence that food waste is a critical environmental and societal issue especially for vulnerable communities. In the case of Rebundle, he highlighted that the solution addresses a very specific need that is replicable in all three countries, and allows the recycling and reduction of waste. He concluded by congratulating all three winners.

Minister Wilkinson highlighted the importance of innovation challenges to help solve different issues. He also mentioned that all three winning ideas are related to the concept of circular economy, which is part of the new CEC Strategic Plan. He congratulated the winners and noted his appreciation that all winners are women.

Administrator Wheeler congratulated all three winners for their winning solutions on important issues such as plastic pollution and food waste. He congratulated the work of Ciara May on Rebundle and extended an invitation to her and her colleague to the EPA Headquarters to discuss more of their business solution once there are travel opportunities.

Council Announcements

The JPAC Chair invited the Council members to make their announcement.

Minister Wilkinson announced the endorsement by the Council of the 2021-2025 CEC Strategic Plan that builds on the last 26 years of work carried out under the NAAEC, and that reflects the new trade

agreement and the Environmental Cooperation Agreement. He presented the strategic priorities that were developed through a consultation process with a broad range of stakeholders.

Administrator Wheeler commented on the Strategic Plan by stressing this is a “crossroad” moment for the CEC with the new trade and environmental cooperation agreements, which are reflected in the Strategic Plan. He also thanked Minister Wilkinson and his team for leading the strategic plan development process.

Mexico’s Alternate Representative Rodolfo Godinez Rosales thanked the Council Chair (Canada) for his leadership work on the Strategic Plan. He stressed the importance for all levels of society to take responsibility in the implementation of the CEC Strategic Plan, including the private sector, civil society, Indigenous communities, and youth.

Closing remarks by Mexico

Mexico’s Alternate Representative Rodolfo Godinez Rosales conveyed his appreciation for the capacity of the CEC to adapt the Council Session to the current pandemic reality. He also underlined the importance for the CEC to support the concepts of human rights and of an equitable society through its work on environmental cooperation. He concluded by thanking all participants and public connected virtually.

Concluding remarks and Passing the Baton by Canada

Minister Wilkinson thanked everyone who contributed to making this online Council Session a productive and meaningful endeavor. After highlighting Canada’s continuing environmental commitments, Minister Wilkinson proudly announced that the Council will issue a joint ministerial statement highlighting a renewed commitment by the Parties for the CEC under the new trade and environmental cooperation agreements. Minister Wilkinson commended and thanked the Youth Innovation Challenge winners, the guest speakers and moderator, as well as CEC Executive Director Richard Morgan and the Secretariat for organizing the meeting. He recognized the hard work and dedication of Nathalie Daoust, Senior Council Liaison and Organizational Performance Officer for her 25th anniversary with the CEC, of Riccardo Embriaco, Director of Administration for his 20th anniversary with the CEC, and Marcela Orozco, Senior Liaison Officer, Advisory Bodies and Public Engagement for her 15th anniversary with the CEC. He also recognized the representation and commitment of the Joint Public Advisory Committee and of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group, and thanked them for sharing their views and perspectives. He concluded by thanking his counterparts from the Council and the online audience for their participation.

Closing remarks by the United States

Administrator Wheeler thanked Minister Wilkinson and Mexico’s Alternate Representative Godinez Rosales, along with the JPAC and TEK Expert Group members for their participation in this trilateral discussion on environmental cooperation. He also thanked the winners of the Youth Innovation Challenge. After thanking the audience, Minister Wilkinson invited the public to next year’s Council Session, which will take place in the United States, tentatively in Kansas City.

The meeting was adjourned.