

CEC Ministerial Statement – 2020

Twenty-seventh Regular Session of the CEC Council

Montreal, 26 June 2020—We, the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), are proud to renew and expand our commitment to environmental cooperation as we implement the new [North American free trade agreement](#). Our ongoing commitment to the CEC since 1994 is rooted in the understanding that addressing environmental issues requires solutions that transcend our national borders.

The incoming [Environmental Cooperation Agreement \(ECA\)](#) supports the new free trade agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States and provides an enhanced cooperative framework to ensure that trade liberalization does not come at the expense of environmental protection.

Prime Minister Trudeau, President Trump, and President López Obrador are anticipating the implementation of the strongest set of environmental provisions ever included in a free trade agreement—emphasizing environmental considerations at the core of international negotiations.

Moreover, for the first time, the new free trade agreement contains Chapter 24, which covers a wide range of global environmental issues, including illegal wildlife trade and illegal logging; sustainable forestry and fisheries management; protection of the marine environment and the ozone layer; and conservation of species at risk and biological diversity.

Environmental cooperation between our three countries will continue to benefit present and future generations in North America. We look forward to the contributions and efforts of the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) and Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG), on whom we rely to provide sound advice on behalf of the North American public.

We also continue to recognize the role of other partners, including in academia and the private sector, Indigenous communities, and youth, whose diversity of perspectives and experiences ensures CEC activities are relevant and effective in addressing North America's environmental challenges.

Aligning our 2021-2025 Strategic Priorities for Trilateral Environmental Cooperation

We are pleased to adopt a comprehensive [2021-2025 CEC Strategic Plan](#), which establishes the CEC's strategic priorities for the coming five years. This plan was developed as a result of ongoing consultations with technical experts across our governments, the Joint Public Advisory Committee, the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group, the Secretariat, and the North American public. These comprehensive consultations are instrumental in ensuring input from a diverse and representative group of stakeholders.

The Council has identified six pillars for this new strategic plan that will implement the provisions of the new free trade agreement and its supporting ECA:

1. Clear Air, Water and Land, particularly addressing matters of mutual interest with respect to air quality and protection of the ozone layer;
2. Preventing and Reducing Pollution in the Marine Environment, particularly taking action to prevent and reduce marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics, and addressing ship pollution;
3. Circular Economy and Sustainable Materials Management, particularly the use of flexible, voluntary mechanisms to protect the environment and natural resources, such as conservation and the sustainable use of those resources;
4. Shared Ecosystems and Species, particularly the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and protection of ecosystems;
5. Resilient Economies and Communities, including promoting environmental goods and services, improving environmental, economic and social performance, contributing to green growth and jobs, and encouraging sustainable development; and
6. Effective Enforcement of Environmental Laws, including promoting public awareness of environmental laws and policies, and enforcement and compliance procedures.

Clean Technology for Resilient Communities

This year's theme of *Clean Technology for Resilient Communities* generated a constructive dialogue on how clean technologies can support communities in becoming more resilient and sustainable.

The [Council session agenda](#) advanced the CEC's work and mission in the context of the new agreement, bringing together the CEC's constituent bodies, namely the CEC

Secretariat, the members of the Joint Public Advisory Committee, and the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group.

In addition to announcing the 2021-2025 CEC Strategic Plan, we also:

- Discussed our respective views on climate change, and reiterated our commitments to low emissions while promoting economic prosperity;
- Engaged in a rich discussion with key experts on community resilience and clean technology, recognizing that adaptation and mitigation approaches that support sustainable management, conservation, and restoration of biodiversity can help maximize potential economic and sustainability benefits; and
- Remain fully committed to continuing to foster youth engagement through the announcement of the CEC's fourth [Youth Innovation Challenge winners](#).

Looking Ahead

The Council recognizes that since its establishment, the CEC has had measurable impacts through training, education, network-building, and enhanced enforcement of environmental laws.

The CEC's work has supported progress in all three countries to reduce air and water pollution, share information on extreme weather and climate events, preserve biodiversity, protect priority species, including the iconic monarch butterfly, prevent food loss and waste, and improve responses to extreme weather.

As we enter this new phase of our cooperative relationship, we look forward to building on these efforts to address environmental concerns in the context of liberalized trade in North America, including charting a course for a post-COVID-19 recovery with opportunities for sustainable and resilient growth.

We look forward to guiding the CEC, including the Secretariat, JPAC and the TEKEG, other government agencies, and all stakeholders in this next era of our cooperative relationship.

We are pleased that this virtual session has provided the opportunity to progress on shared priorities despite the current challenges our communities are facing from the COVID-19 pandemic and the limitations regarding travel and hosting in-person meetings. We look forward to next year's annual Regular Session, which will be hosted by the United States of America.