



FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ of the NAFTA Environment Commission's 4th Annual Session

--Pittsburgh, 13 June 1997.

The Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)—made up of Mexican Secretary of Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries Julia Carabias, US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol Browner, represented by Deputy Administrator Fred Hansen, and Canadian Environment Minister Christine Stewart, represented by Environment Ambassador John Fraser—today reported to the public on joint actions taken to meet the goals set under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), the environmental side accord to NAFTA. The Minister for Environmental Protection of Alberta, Ty Lund, also attended the meeting.

During an open dialogue with members of the public from Canada, Mexico and the United States, the environment leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the CEC as a dynamic and open forum for helping the NAFTA partners meet global goals to ensure a cleaner, healthier environment for future generations.

Reducing the Threat of Toxic Chemicals to Human Health and the Environment

The Council announced today that it has completed regional action plans for the reduction and eventual elimination of two dangerous pesticides, chlordane and DDT, from the North American environment. A regional action plan for the reduction of PCBs was completed in April, and is already being implemented. These action plans are a regional response to growing local and international concern over the detrimental impact of these toxic substances on human health and the environment. Implementing these actions plans will also contribute to the reduction of long-range transport of air pollutants to the Arctic. The Council expects a draft regional action plan on human-caused releases of mercury to be made public for comment and review by July 15. A final plan will be ready in September. Criteria to select additional toxic substances for priority action will be presented to Council this fall.

Strengthening Efforts to Improve Environmental Compliance

The Council affirmed the primary role of governments in establishing environmental standards, and for verifying and enforcing compliance with laws and regulations. Strong and effective governmental programs to enforce environmental laws and regulations are essential to ensure protection of public health and the environment. The Council also recognized the potential contribution of voluntary programs, such as ISO 14000, to complement environmental laws and regulations. The Council called upon industry to become partners in efforts to protect the North American environment and to pursue innovative private sector approaches for improving environmental compliance.



Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment

Building upon the work of the North American Intergovernmental Group on Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment, the signatories to the NAFTA side accord today agreed to complete a legally binding agreement consistent with their obligations under Article 10(7) of the NAAEC by April 15, 1998. This agreement will include, among other things, provisions on assessment of transboundary environmental impacts, notice to the country potentially affected by those impacts, consideration of mitigation measures, and public participation in decision making. The Council also agreed that a working document on a transboundary environmental impact assessment agreement will be distributed publicly in the fall.

Review of Enforcement Submission Guidelines and Development of Model Rules for Dispute Settlement

The Council today agreed to initiate the review process of the Guidelines for Submissions on Enforcement Matters under Articles 14 and 15 of the NAAEC. The Council will exchange proposed modifications no later than September 1. The Joint Public Advisory Committee, the advisory group of the CEC, will have an opportunity to comment on the mutually agreed-upon modifications during a 60-day period. Final modifications reflecting this public input will be ready by December 15. The Council also agreed to develop model rules for dispute settlement between the signatories to the NAAEC by the end of the year.

Environment and Trade

A group of trade and environmental officials from Canada, Mexico and the United States will develop recommendations on how the CEC and the NAFTA Free Trade Commission can best fulfill the mandate of the environmental side accord by working together on a number of trade-related activities. The three-year NAFTA Environmental Effects project will report results by the end of 1997. The general objective of the 1997 project was to provide the Council with elements for an analytical approach to assess whether NAFTA's trade liberalization has influenced the Canadian, Mexican, and the United States economies in ways which have had environmental effects and, to the extent possible, identify any specific environmental effects related to NAFTA. In order to carry on with the side accord's ongoing obligation in this area, the trade and environment officials group will develop the terms of reference for the 1998 work program on NAFTA Environmental Effects.

Transboundary Air Monitoring and Modeling

The Council today recognized progress on increasing the number of transboundary air monitoring and modeling initiatives in North America. Two pilot projects are currently underway along the US-Mexican and Canadian-US borders. One initiative is aimed at reducing pollution along a primary



NAFTA transportation corridor, US Interstate 35 in Texas, and connecting highways in northern Mexico. The other initiative is investigating the transboundary flow of ground-level ozone in the northeastern United States and eastern Canada.

Evaluate Success of the NAFTA Environmental Side Accord

The Council today agreed to a process for reviewing the NAAEC. This review, which is called for by the Agreement within its first four years of operation, will include consultation with the public. The final report on the operations and effectiveness of the NAAEC implementation will be made public by the Council at the end of the year.

Council Meeting in the Fall

The Council today agreed that it will explore the possibility of holding a meeting this fall at the CEC Secretariat in Montreal to accelerate progress on important priorities of the CEC.

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