



Commission for Environmental Cooperation
of North America

Comisión para la Cooperación Ambiental
de América del Norte

Commission de coopération environnementale
de l'Amérique du Nord

CEC Ministerial Statement

Twelfth Regular Session of the CEC Council

Quebec, Canada, 22 June 2005—We, the environment ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States, members of the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC or “the Commission”) met for our annual Regular Session on 22 June 2005.

At last year’s session in Puebla, on the occasion of the Commission’s tenth anniversary, we met to review our progress, re-affirm our commitment to the CEC, and set directions for the future. Over the past year we have worked in a manner consistent with the 2004 Puebla Declaration, which describes our new priorities, a new path forward, and a new way of accomplishing our goals. We have also taken into account the recommendations of the Ten-year Review and Assessment Committee, the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), and key stakeholders.

As set forth in the Puebla Declaration, our priorities for cooperation in the coming years are: the development of *Information for Decision Making*, support for *Capacity Building*, and ongoing work to address *Trade and Environment* issues more effectively in order to promote environmental protection and sustainability.

To advance our agenda, we are pleased to adopt our five-year Strategic Plan that strives to build on our strengths and the unique nature of the CEC. It describes how we intend to work together to protect the environment in North America, to promote and facilitate cooperation among our three countries, and to provide tools and information to enable citizens, governments and industry alike to protect our shared environment.

The Strategic Plan 2005–2010 sets specific goals and objectives for each of our new priorities. To accomplish them, the CEC has launched a series of cooperative initiatives that build on our experience and that are designed to produce visible and concrete results. We commit ourselves to the effective oversight of this strategic plan and to ensuring that our science and information products are of high quality. Along with this agenda for cooperation, we note the important work that the Secretariat undertakes pursuant to Articles 13, 14 and 15 of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC).

Information for Decision Making

In this session, we have endorsed a suite of initiatives that will enable our governments and others, in both the public and private sectors, to make better-informed decisions on environmental concerns. Our goal is to develop and share a description of North America using environmental information that is integrated, comparable, and of consistent high quality. Our immediate focus is to enhance the quality and comparability of North American air quality information. Over time our efforts will expand to refine the portrayal of some common North American issues, including invasive species, toxic substances and wildlife conservation.

Capacity Building

Our goal is to strengthen capacities in our three countries to manage environmental issues of common concern by sharing what each of us does best, so as to improve our ability to make progress together faster. We have committed to improving, over the next five years, our abilities to assess and manage chemicals of concern, undertake pollution prevention, participate in biodiversity conservation, and develop effective environmental management programs. The CEC will focus initial efforts on Mexico, where the opportunity is greatest. In particular, we discussed approaches to work with the private sector, to improve competitiveness and environmental performance through an innovative partnership to integrate environmental management.

Trade and Environment

Promoting a better understanding of trade and environment relationships is central to the CEC's mission. The Strategic Plan will help us increase our capacity to identify and address trade-related environmental concerns, enhance the relationship between the CEC and the NAFTA Free Trade Commission (FTC) and bring more focus to the work of the CEC.

Our goal is to promote policies and actions that provide mutual benefits for North America and we endorsed several initiatives to accomplish this over the next five years. These include: improving our capacity to assess NAFTA's environmental effects; establishing key elements to enhance markets for renewable energy; developing tools and practical approaches to foster green purchasing; developing a North American approach to reduce the cost and harm caused by invasive alien species; and improving enforcement of environmental laws, particularly at our borders.

Expanding Partnerships for Environmental Stewardship

Our session was enriched by open discussion and exchange of ideas with members of the general public from each of our countries. We received the benefit of advice from the members of JPAC. We thank them for their dedication and ongoing effort to help us keep public engagement at the heart of our operations.

We also had the privilege of meeting with business leaders from each of our three countries. The Council has reached an agreement to work to increase the contribution of the private sector and other stakeholders in Canada, Mexico and the United States in the implementation of the initiatives we have endorsed to accomplish our strategic goals.

The CEC was established by Canada, Mexico and the United States to build cooperation among the NAFTA partners in implementing the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), the environmental side accord to the NAFTA. The CEC addresses environmental issues of continental concern, with particular attention to the environmental challenges and opportunities presented by continent-wide free trade. The Council, the CEC's governing body, is composed of the federal environment ministers (or equivalent) of the three countries, and meets at least once a year. The Council members are Canadian Environment Minister Stéphane Dion, Mexican Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources, Alberto Cárdenas Jiménez and US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) is a 15-member, independent, volunteer body that provides advice and public input to Council on any matter within the scope of NAAEC.

For more information on any of the topics reviewed by Council, visit <http://www.cec.org>.