



**Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) Ministerial Statement**  
*Sixteenth Regular Session of the CEC Council*

**Denver, Colorado, 24 June 2009**—We, the environment ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States, as Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), met for our annual Regular Session and consulted with our Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) and the public on 24 June 2009.

This Council Session marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC). We have taken note of the progress we have made in the maturity and extent of our environmental cooperation, in promoting sustainable development in the region, in strengthening environmental enforcement, in addressing the linkages between trade and environment, and in promoting public participation in regional environmental matters. We look forward to continued progress in these areas.

We have also recognized that this 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary comes in the midst of one of the most serious international economic crises we have faced in decades. The environmental challenges today, our understanding of them, and the tools to deal with them, are not the same as they were fifteen, ten or even five years ago.

Canada, Mexico and the United States reaffirm their commitment to tackle environmental problems across North America. This can only be accomplished by partnering and engaging extensively with stakeholders and the public in all three countries and by promoting a sense of shared responsibility and stewardship for the environment in our region.

To this end, we committed today to renew, revitalize and refocus the CEC to better serve the environment and citizens of our countries. More specifically, we have asked our officials to return in mid-July with a proposal to examine the governance of the CEC with a view to enhance accountability, improve transparency of the Secretariat's activities, ensure alignment with Council priorities, and set clear performance goals.

We agreed on a new policy direction for the CEC to ensure it is focused on the key environmental priorities of North America, in the context of free trade and more integrated economies, and is positioned to deliver clear results.

The CEC's next Strategic Plan, for 2010–2015, will focus on a select few environmental trilateral priorities, namely:

- Healthy Communities and Ecosystems
- Climate Change – Low-Carbon Economy
- Greening the Economy in North America

To improve on the delivery of these priorities, we also agreed to several operational changes to the CEC to ensure it serves as a model of transparency and accountability, and remains an effective and relevant organization in accordance with the NAAEC. These changes will focus on streamlining the CEC's multi-million dollar annual cooperative work program, modernizing its citizen submission process, reprioritizing and increasing the transparency of its expenditures, providing clear direction to future executive directors at the start of their term, and strengthening the supportive functions of the Secretariat.

Over the course of the meeting, we also received updates from the executive director of the CEC Secretariat, Mr. Adrián Vázquez, and various working groups on recent successes of the CEC. These included steps taken to improve cooperation on North American air quality management, significant reductions in risk from mercury, a system to assess ecological conditions of marine protected areas, completion of a seamless North America-wide reporting system on industrial pollutants, more environmentally sound integrated regional supply chains, and a training program for customs and border officials to aid in combating the illegal distribution of hazardous wastes and ozone-depleting substances.

As always, we had the benefit of the considered input of our Joint Public Advisory Committee, which hosted a public workshop on climate policy coherence in North America. In keeping with our commitment to public engagement, we were also pleased to participate in a public meeting and exchange views with numerous citizens from each of our three countries on environmental issues of their choosing. We look forward to the Committee's ongoing engagement as it serves a critical role to ensure active public participation and success in our endeavor to strengthen this important trilateral organization.

In closing, we would like to thank Mr. Vázquez for his heartfelt dedication to the CEC over the past three years. With his three-year term coming to an end this summer, we will soon be launching a process to select the next executive director.

With this new vision for the CEC, we are confident that Canada, Mexico and the United States will be well positioned to tackle our shared environmental challenges of the next decade.

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*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 Jim Prentice, Mexican Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources, Juan Elvira Quesada, and US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) is a 15-member, volunteer body that provides independent 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>.