



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

Montreal, Canada, 22 June 2011—Today, we, the environment ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States, are proud to present a comprehensive set of initiatives designed to conserve, protect and enhance the North American environment through the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). Working through the unique partnership of the CEC allows us to achieve environmental objectives in a way that none of the three countries could achieve alone.

Our vision for the CEC represents a new path forward for environmental cooperation in North America. It delivers initiatives that bring together partners and connect communities across North America to promote a sense of shared responsibility and stewardship for the environment.

Strategic objectives to meet new priorities

Our cooperative work program for 2011-12 is a coherent plan to address our main priorities—promoting healthy communities and ecosystems; addressing climate change by moving to a low-carbon economy; and working with partners in the private sector to green North America's economy. This allows our government experts to deliver on the strategic objectives that will produce results and direct environmental benefits at the community, indigenous, local and regional levels.

During our meeting today in Montreal we heard from our Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), members of the public, industry and nongovernmental organizations, as well as our officials about some of the work already under way.

We are focusing efforts to establish coherent approaches to manage risks posed by harmful chemicals of mutual concern to our three countries: identifying and tracking them in commerce, monitoring their impact on the environment and human health, and striving to make available the most accurate information possible throughout North America.

We are encouraged by progress on work to improve the information we gather and share among our countries regarding greenhouse gases. Having comparable information and data is vital to efforts to address climate change.

Changes to our climate will have a direct impact on our shared ecosystems, especially those that are already fragile due to biodiversity and habitat loss, water scarcity or other threats. New work in partnership with local communities that conserves the ecosystems spanning our continent will help protect vital areas such as the grasslands and the transboundary Big Bend-Río Bravo priority conservation area.

Our enforcement officials and other experts continue coordinated efforts to better manage electronic waste, along with other, sometimes illegally traded products, such as restricted ozone-depleting gases and hazardous materials. As we heard from our Joint Public Advisory Committee, their public forum considered a wide range of issues around the growing e-waste challenge facing our countries.

Recognizing the increasing impacts of natural disasters, such as forest fires and flooding, and their relation to adaptation and resilience, we have decided to explore options to strengthen collaboration in this area.

Creating partnerships, empowering communities

Today, we directed \$1.4 million of the CEC budget to fund the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA) to support communities in their efforts to locally address environmental problems across North America. We look forward to enhancing our partnerships and engagement with groups and individuals from our communities in projects that can be models for action throughout the region.

We ask our communities to propose innovative environmental initiatives and direct them to view the Call for Proposals, which is now available on the CEC website (www.cec.org). The proposals will be reviewed this summer and the first round of grants will be announced later this year.

Streamlining our cooperative work

Based on our strategic plan for 2010-15, the Operational Plan for 2011-12 focuses on delivering on our new priorities through good governance, transparency, performance evaluation, and clear goals and objectives. We are confident that this Operational Plan defines initiatives that will achieve clear environmental results that will benefit us all. We have also heard from the CEC Secretariat about ongoing efforts to renew and revitalize its operations in support of these initiatives.

We also demonstrated our commitment to Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) by formally announcing a trilateral review to modernize and improve the submission process. More specifically, this work is expected to culminate, at the 2012 Council Session, in changes to the *Guidelines for Submissions on Enforcement Matters under Articles 14 and 15 of the NAAEC* in order to ensure that submissions are considered efficiently, effectively, and serve the interests of all stakeholders. The SEM process was established seventeen years ago; a comprehensive trilateral review is now timely and appropriate. To this end, our officials will work closely with the Secretariat and carefully consider input from the JPAC and the public.

This past year has allowed us to add significant substance to our vision for a renewed CEC, but more work remains. With important changes and new tools in place to support our communities, the coming years will enable Council to—even further—focus this organization on a set of initiatives that deliver North American solutions to global challenges. We look forward to the 2012 Council Session in the United States to further advance this work.

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 parallel agreement 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 Peter Kent, Mexican Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources, Juan Rafael 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>.