

Ministerial Statement

Draft: 11 July 2012

New Orleans, 11 July 2012— Today, following a successful meeting of the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), we are pleased to report that our discussions with key community, university and government partners from across North America have reinforced the accomplishments of our collective work, as well as the challenges we face as a region.

During our public dialogue which included students and professors from our three countries, we exchanged ideas with them and other members of the public on ways to collaboratively protect, sustain and restore the health of people, communities and ecosystems.

Progress through community partnerships

We also heard from our partners in the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA). They reported on how their community-based projects are already producing results that can be shared across our region. These include environmental health initiatives that protect children from waterborne diseases in Mexico, replacing wood-burning stoves and other improvements to enhance indoor air quality for Alaskan native populations, and building the capacity of indigenous communities in Canada and the US to adapt to climate changes affecting their livelihoods.

Our Joint Public Advisory Committee—informed by a two-day workshop—also provided us with their views on policy and action for a resilient future for North America.

Modernizing the Submissions on Enforcement Matters Process

Delivering on earlier commitments, today we also took decisive action to modernize the implementation of the Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) process, making a number of improvements to increase timeliness, transparency, and accessibility, and bring greater clarity to this valuable information-sharing mechanism. Among the most significant changes, the revisions to the *Guidelines on Submissions on Enforcement Matters under Articles 14 and 15 of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC)* establish target deadlines for key steps in the SEM process to reduce the average processing time by half. Additionally, the changes call for Parties to follow up on concluded submissions with information on any new developments and actions taken regarding matters raised in such submissions. These revisions and changes are the culmination of a year-long collaboration between the Parties and the JPAC, the CEC Secretariat, and members of the North American public.

In line with our commitment to a robust and effective public submission process, and building on the collaboration and momentum of the past year's efforts, we have

directed that additional steps be taken to enhance the SEM process, such as establishing new online tools to help with the preparation of a submission, increasing public outreach to build awareness of the process, and assessing compliance with the deadlines. Together these actions are expected to ensure that the public submission process remains a critical mechanism for facilitating public participation, supporting government transparency, and promoting the effective enforcement of environmental law in North America.

Strengthening our commitment to greening the North American economy

Noting the important international developments on building paths to foster greener economies, we discussed actions to strengthen this area of our cooperative work so that it can then be reproduced at the local, national, regional and international levels. We have instructed our officials to consider specific initiatives in areas such as electronic waste, short lived climate forcers, advancing on trilateral clean energy initiatives, and other specific economic integrated sectors in North America.

We thank the Panel for its final report and for its recommendations for a new framework. Earlier this year, the CEC Executive Director participated in the meeting of the NAFTA Free Trade Commission. Pursuant to Article 10(6) of the NAAEC, we look forward to working with the Free Trade Commission, through the relevant officials, to ensure ongoing cooperation and communication.

Looking to the future in trilateral cooperation

In continuing our efforts from 2009 to build a more effective and efficient organization, we further direct our officials to develop fewer, more strategic projects that will produce significant results under the next operational plan.

We look forward to the 2013 Council Session in Mexico.

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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 CEC addresses environmental issues of continental concern according to the priorities and objectives set out in the Council Strategic Plan.

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>.