



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

Los Cabos, Mexico, 11 July 2013—North America’s major environmental challenges—including air pollution from transportation, climate change, and the movement of hazardous waste—require joint, coordinated action in the context of the region’s shared borders and closely linked economies.

During our meeting today as the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), we agreed to a new Operational Plan for 2013–2014 that focuses on collaborative actions in three strategic areas to maximize our impact: greening transportation, tackling climate change while improving air quality, and addressing waste in trade.

We support continuing CEC efforts aimed at enhancing the alignment of environmental standards across North America, including in the transportation sector, in accordance with our legal frameworks and national circumstances.

Participants at our town hall meeting on transportation and the environment, as well as our Joint Public Advisory Committee members during their round table on sustainable transportation yesterday, called for action to reduce the environmental impact from our transportation networks that serve as vital links between our countries. To this end, we are announcing new initiatives to reduce emissions from trucks and buses, as well as from maritime transportation, especially at our borders and along our coasts.

We have also decided to bolster our joint efforts to combat climate change as well as harmful air pollutants that threaten the health of our communities and our economies. These efforts are intended to focus on reducing carbon in the atmosphere through protecting coastal and forest ecosystems, avoiding black carbon emissions, collecting and disseminating reliable and comparable data on greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants, and promoting green building construction.

The management of hazardous wastes in trade, including electronic wastes and spent lead-acid batteries (SLABs), requires particular attention from our governments. The CEC Secretariat’s recent *Hazardous Trade?* report on SLABs made specific recommendations that we have considered in developing a North American response, through our enforcement and regulatory officials, to ensure that these wastes are properly managed to avoid harming the environment and the health of our communities.

Finally, as part of the new Operational Plan, we intend to continue our collaboration on key North American initiatives tracking pollutants, protecting shared ecosystems, reducing risks from chemicals, and coordinating environmental enforcement.

Taking action through community partnerships

Communities across North America are tackling environmental challenges head on with exciting and successful community-led projects that are restoring ecosystems altered by invasive species, improving the quality of life for the communities through sustainable building techniques in coastal communities devastated by hurricanes, and restoring natural diversity while beautifying neighborhoods by removing concrete and asphalt. These are just a few of the projects with direct and positive impacts on their communities and the environment that we are proud to support through our North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA).

Today we are again calling on community leaders to propose hands-on projects that demonstrate innovative approaches to addressing community, indigenous, local and regional environmental issues by promoting partnerships and delivering clear and tangible results that can be shared with communities across North America. Building on the many success stories generated through this grant program we have dedicated \$1.2 million to support these new projects over the coming two years. Proposals can be submitted until 10 September 2013, and we look forward to announcing grant recipients early next year.

New online tools for the Submissions on Enforcement Matters process

We are committed to ensuring that the Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) process continues to be an efficient and valuable public participation mechanism, promoting the effective enforcement of environmental law in our three countries. Last year we adopted significant revisions to the *Guidelines on Submissions on Enforcement Matters under Articles 14 and 15 of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC)*, in order to ensure that the process is more timely, accessible, and transparent.

Today we are pleased to announce two new tools designed to make the SEM process more accessible to the North American public. First, a new online portal, designed to provide members of the public with a user-friendly resource for filing submissions. Second, in support of Council's overall objectives to promote transparency and accountability, an online SEM "tracker" that will allow interested parties to easily monitor compliance with the mandatory and target SEM process deadlines set forth in the Agreement and the SEM Guidelines.

In the year ahead, our officials plan to work with the Secretariat and the Joint Public Advisory Committee to ensure effective SEM process monitoring and assessment and to begin implementation of a SEM outreach strategy.

Twenty years of successful environmental cooperation

We look forward to meeting in Canada in 2014, where we plan to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, an agreement of historic significance borne out of trade agreement negotiations, which has enabled our three countries to work together on issues affecting our shared environment. From tracking

pollutants and protecting migratory species that cross our borders to greening our economies by reducing risks from chemicals and making our industrial supply chains more sustainable, we have achieved significant results together. We intend to continue and strengthen these joint efforts over the years to come, particularly as we begin work on the CEC's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

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 José Guerra, and Acting US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Bob Perciasepe. 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>.

APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL:

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