

CEC Ministerial Statement - 2016
Twenty-third Regular Session of the CEC Council

Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, 9 September 2016—We are proud that the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation was the first agreement to clearly link trade policy with environmental protection. In light of our recent renewed commitment to enhance our regional alignment on climate change and environmental policy, and the movement of environmental goods and services, the CEC should ensure it remains a leading environmental forum globally for bringing together the environment and economic growth, reflecting the interests and priorities of our three countries.

We, the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), met for our 23rd annual Regular Session focused on “Sustainable Communities and Ecosystems” as well as on “Youth and the Environment in North America.” In addition, the CEC’s Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) hosted a public forum on biodiversity and climate change, both pressing environmental challenges of our time.

Climate Change Action

This CEC Council Session took place after several significant milestones for our three countries: including the signing of the Paris Agreement on climate change and the North American Leaders Summit (NALS). At the NALS, held in Ottawa on 29 June 2016, the North American Leaders launched an ambitious Statement and Action Plan on Climate, Clean Energy, and Environmental Partnership, reaffirming a historic commitment of Canada, Mexico, and the United States to be global leaders in addressing climate change and protecting the environment.

Here at the CEC, we reiterate our commitment to clean and sustainable growth, and support strong and effective actions to address climate change. The trilateral Partnership Statement included commitments on the early ratification of the Paris Agreement, including robust implementation of its transparency provisions, a landmark clean energy goal for North America, and the development of both mid-century and also long-term low-greenhouse gas emissions strategies.

Furthermore, we recognize the need to reduce short-lived climate pollutants. We will strive to implement stringent domestic regulations on air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions, and an ambitious oil and gas methane reduction target. We commit to further trilateral cooperation and information exchange on methane emissions reductions, including holding a trilateral technical discussion between our government and industry experts. We are also making a strong commitment to secure an amendment on the phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) under the Montreal Protocol, and regulations for

strengthening fuel efficiency and low-sulphur fuel programs. We will continue to work together, and with other countries, to make progress in related multilateral fora.

We, the CEC Council Ministers, stand ready to propel coordinated action that will deliver results in support of our Leaders' mandate, by strengthening our cooperation, including through concrete projects via the CEC's Strategic and Operational Plans.

Sustainable Communities and Ecosystems

Last year, in Boston, we endorsed the CEC Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 and, through key domestic and international initiatives, the three countries have been addressing environmental challenges aligned to our strategic priorities: climate change mitigation and adaptation, green growth, and sustainable communities and ecosystems. Our meeting in Mérida has given us the opportunity to address this last topic by reviewing our more prominent past and present cooperative work, highlighting examples of the relationship between ecosystems, job creation, gender impacts, and income generation. In doing so, we identified marine litter and food waste as future areas of work.

Youth and the Environment in North America

Today we engaged with the youth who bring a spirit of innovation and will be the decision-makers of tomorrow. Building on Mexico's example of appointing a youth member to JPAC, the Council agreed to institutionalize youth representation in the work of the CEC. By raising awareness of today's environmental challenges, promoting capacity building, and increasing youth participation and dialogue, we will foster environmental sustainability across North America. We are encouraged by the youth representatives who participated with us in person and virtually from our three countries.

We intend to develop and implement a path forward that will focus on producing tangible initiatives for youth engagement, including our indigenous youth, involving relevant areas for the CEC, like food waste and marine litter. In doing so, we will use new social networking tools to encourage the crowdsourcing of new ideas that are good for both the environment and the economy.

Joint Public Advisory Committee

We acknowledge and greatly appreciate the contributions to North American environmental stewardship made by the members of JPAC, and their continued efforts to reach out to civil society on issues of global and regional importance, such as "Biodiversity and Climate Change." In this session, JPAC reported to the Council on what they heard from experts and members of the public regarding the impacts of climate change on ecosystems and biodiversity as well as on adaptive management strategies to help counter these impacts.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

At the 2015 Council session, we delivered on previous decisions with respect to traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) by establishing a Roster of Experts on TEK. We celebrate the progress made since that time, including the recommendations of the trilateral TEK workshop held in March: the ongoing development of a Statement of Principles, a guidance document, as well as a North American inventory and map of TEK expertise. The CEC will develop case studies that showcase best practices, incorporating TEK in decision making in

each of our countries. By doing so, the Council will ensure the integration of TEK in all CEC activities.

NAPECA

We recognize the regional and national community projects benefiting from the third cycle of the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action fund, which focus on sustainable communities and ecosystems, gender-based opportunities and green growth. We value the role NAPECA has played and will focus the next cycles of grants on supporting our underserved communities. In order to review its performance, we are directing the Secretariat to deliver an evaluation of NAPECA by the end of the current cycle.

Conclusion

The years 2015 and 2016 have seen historic progress for global and regional actions on the environment. Environmental issues are at the forefront of international dialogue. The CEC, as a long-standing platform for environmental cooperation among Canada, Mexico and the United States, is well positioned to build on the momentum from Paris and respond to our Leaders' mandates. At this Council Session, we are proud that the CEC has not only become a model to advance environmental protection while promoting trade and economic growth, but has also expanded the involvement of indigenous people and youth in its vision. In light of our recent renewed commitment to enhance our regional alignment on climate change and environmental policy, the CEC should ensure it remains a leading forum globally to enhance support for both environment and trade.

We look forward to meeting next year in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada, the birthplace of Canadian Confederation, in the lead up to Canada's 150th birthday. We look forward to working closely with JPAC, the TEK Roster of Experts, youth, and all of the stakeholders and members of civil society to ensure that the CEC stays relevant in its third decade as a model of trilateral cooperation on the North American environment.

APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL:

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