



Advice to Council No: 18-02

JPAC Strategic Communications Meeting on “Enhancing the CEC’s Communications and Outreach Efforts in North America and Beyond”

The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) of North America:

IN ACCORDANCE with Article 16(4) of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), which stipulates that JPAC “may provide advice to Council on any matter within the scope of this agreement (...);”

HAVING NOTED that on September 30, 2018, the Parties to NAFTA and the NAAEC announced the completion of negotiations of the United States – Mexico – Canada Agreement (USMCA) that is intended to replace the NAFTA;

HIGHLIGHTING that under Art. 24.25(2) of the USMCA draft text released by the Office of the United States Trade Representative, the Parties signal their commitment to expanding cooperation between them on environmental matters in order to achieve their shared environmental goals and objectives;

ALSO HIGHLIGHTING that under Art. 24.25(3) of the USMCA draft text, the Parties have signaled their commitment to undertake environmental cooperative activities pursuant to an Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA), which, according to public statements made by the Parties, is currently in negotiation;

NOTING that Art. 24.25(3) of the USMCA draft text indicates that the Commission for Environmental Cooperation established under the NAAEC shall be responsible for the coordination and review of activities undertaken pursuant to the Environmental Cooperation Agreement;

UNDERLINING that under Art. 24.15(3) of the USMCA draft text, the Parties “recognize the importance of respecting, preserving and maintaining knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities that contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity”, and that under Art. 24.2 (4) of the USMCA draft text, the Parties recognize the importance of engaging with Indigenous Peoples in the long-term conservation of our environment;

UNDERLINING FURTHER that under Art. 24.26(9) of the USMCA draft text, the Parties “recognize the importance of resource efficiency in the implementation of this Chapter and the desirability of using new technologies to facilitate communication and interaction between the Parties and with the public”;

RECALLING JPAC Advice to Council No. 17-05, in particular the recommendation related to stakeholder engagement emphasizing that the CEC should continue efforts to expand stakeholder engagement and public participation, outreach and education through CEC activities;

ALSO RECALLING the JPAC Advice to Council No. 18-01 on future areas of trilateral environmental cooperation;

HAVING CONDUCTED a strategic communications meeting, in light of the NAFTA renegotiation process, in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, on 25-26 October 2018, to better understand the position of the CEC in the contemporary North American and international environmental contexts, and explore new communication and outreach strategies to support and enhance implementation of the CEC's role in our region and beyond. The meeting included government representatives, JPAC members and Secretariat staff, along with communications experts from the media, international organizations, and academia, who discussed approaches to enhancing the CEC's cooperative agenda, public outreach and engagement strategies, and the submissions on enforcement matters (SEM) process.;

SUBMITS the following recommendations for Council's consideration:

RECOMMENDATION #1: The Council should take immediate steps to establish a strategic communications workgroup composed of representatives of the CEC's three bodies (Council, Secretariat and JPAC) and any other relevant experts, with the mandate to relaunch and modernize the CEC's overarching stakeholder engagement and communications strategy.

The issue of strengthening public outreach is highly relevant in the context of the NAFTA/USMCA and NAAEC/ECA re-negotiation processes, and of current discussions within the CEC regarding the renewal of its visibility and effectiveness in North America. Our discussion provided direct, practical insight into the range of communications and outreach strategies that could be used to strengthen the CEC's connections to North American communities, enable broader transmission of knowledge on the CEC's citizen-engagement mechanisms, improve access to the CEC's environmental data systems, scientific studies and other tools oriented towards various stakeholders, and raise its prominence as an international environmental organization that is critical to sustainable trade development across the continent and globally.

Based on insights gained at the Guadalajara JPAC strategic communications meeting, the informal workinggroup should focus on the following:

- Immediately develop a strategic planning process and timeline to reevaluate the CEC's public outreach, communications and stakeholder engagement strategies, taking into consideration the objectives of, *inter alia*: (1) educating all relevant stakeholders on the improvements in regional environmental cooperation that have been adopted under the USMCA and the enhanced role of the CEC pursuant to the USMCA's environmental chapter and the ECA, (2) identifying and increasing target audience engagement and active participation in the work of the CEC, (3) improving the CEC's internal capacity,

- (4) increasing media attention on regional environmental cooperation, and (5) updating CEC communication campaigns, visual identity, social media and other digital platforms.
- Strengthen CEC strategies for engagement with private and public sector stakeholders, with a particular focus on strategizing and executing ambassador programs for municipalities, educational institutions, green investors, start-ups and entrepreneurs, and young innovators.
- Consider enhancing global outreach strategies for the CEC, notably, as an official observer in relevant international environmental cooperation forums, such as meetings held under multilateral environmental agreements ratified by all Parties and mentioned in the Environment Chapter of the USMCA draft text.
- Recognizing the imminent announcement of the ECA, work so that the public and the media better understand the CEC's purpose and role to improve our shared environmental goals in North America, focusing particularly on its public image, visual identity, and media profile.

RECOMMENDATION #2: In developing the strategic plan, the workgroup should ensure that this new strategy addresses the following:

- Improves the effectiveness of CEC communications and messaging to the public and other targeted audiences.
- Improves the scope and effectiveness of public participation within the CEC, strengthening collaboration between Council, JPAC, Secretariat and the TEK Expert Group.
- Invests in partnerships, projects and initiatives that will improve the resilience of North American ecosystems and communities.
- Assesses the availability and effectiveness of a wide range of tools, including both traditional and digital communication approaches, when reaching out to diverse target audiences (Indigenous communities, remote areas, youth, etc.).
- Invests in the development of tools and sharing knowledge that will assist local governments and indigenous and local communities to strengthen their capacity to address increasing heat, disaster risks and rising sea levels affecting North America.
- Expands the lifespans and dissemination of CEC projects and initiatives.
- Tracks the long-term performance of the CEC and its operational projects.
- Links future CEC projects and initiatives more closely to global frameworks for cooperation on environmental protection, climate resilience and sustainable development endorsed by all Parties, notably the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Ensure that the TEK Expert Group (TEKEG) is involved in the development of the strategic communications planning process.

In collaboration with the TEK Expert Group, and in light of Articles 24.15(3) and 24.2(4) of the USMCA draft text, consider the development of a public communications campaign related to the process of codification of indigenous customary and traditional law related to North American environmental conservation, protection and sustainable development.

There was a strong consensus at the meeting that it is important to quickly move forward on the above and JPAC is ready to work immediately with the Council and the Secretariat. JPAC is also confident that these short-term and long-term recommendations contained herein will help the CEC Council better achieve our shared environmental goals and is unanimous in supporting this Advice to Council.

**Approved by the JPAC members
29 November 2018**