



Advice to Council No: 19-01

JPAC Expert Forum on Building Disaster-Resilient Communities in North America

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 states that JPAC “may provide advice to Council on any matter within the scope of this agreement (...) and on the implementation and further elaboration of this agreement, and may perform such other functions as the Council may direct”;

HAVING conducted an expert forum in Mexico City, Mexico, on 24 June 2019, highlighting examples of community resilience throughout North America, including the significant efforts currently underway in all three countries to foster a culture of disaster prevention, through early preparedness and effective response, as well as emergent needs and new possibilities for trilateral cooperation on disaster resilience under the CEC;

RECALLING that the New Urban Agenda was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016, and that it was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-eighth plenary meeting of the seventy-first session on 23 December 2016. The New Urban Agenda is guided by interlinked principles, including:

- Principle (c): *Ensure environmental sustainability by promoting clean energy and sustainable use of land and resources in urban development, by protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, including adopting healthy lifestyles in harmony with nature, by promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns, by building urban resilience, by reducing disaster risks and by mitigating and adapting to climate change.*

RECALLING that Canada, Mexico and the United States, as United Nations member states, have endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes the following Global Goals and related Targets:

- Sustainable Development Goal 1: *End poverty in all its forms everywhere*, and Target 1.5: *By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters*;
- Sustainable Development Goal 2, *End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture*, and Target 2.4: *By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production,*

that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality;

- Sustainable Development Goal 9, *Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*, includes Target 1: *Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all;*
- Sustainable Development Goal 11, *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*, includes Target 11.b: *By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels;*
- Sustainable Development Goal 13, *Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*, and Target 13.1: *Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries;*

EMPHASIZING the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C (SR15)*, indicating the urgency of climate action for the next decade as well as the synergies and trade-offs between mitigation options and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

SUBMITS the following recommendations for Council’s consideration:

Recommendation #1: By early 2021, the Council, in coordination with JPAC, TEK Expert Group, and the CEC Secretariat, should complete an Extreme Weather and Climate-Related Disaster Action Plan that clearly addresses the following issues:

- Outlines urgent areas for action, cooperation and investment in relation to extreme weather events and climate-related disasters
- Describes transformative solutions that address priority issues and close community response gaps
- Creates strategies to deepen public awareness and mobilize civic action to ensure the pressing threats created by global warming garner commensurate individual, state, and trilateral effort and action
- Defines and applies an ecosystem resilience requirement as part of disaster planning and response protocols

Recommendation #2: By the end of 2020, Council should provide sufficient resources to the Secretariat to create an interactive, online climate change education portal that builds climate and environmental literacy across society, and specifically aims to:

- Democratize access to scientific information and Traditional Knowledge
- Close the disconnect between scientific advice on climate change and actions taken by citizens and all levels of government
- Engage school programs and youth participation on the topic of climate change and disaster risk and resilience
- Emphasize the importance and value of storytelling and non-formal styles of learning

Recommendation #3: By the end of 2020, Council should complete a Disaster Resilience Governance Report Card that assesses and compares the strengths and weaknesses of Canadian, Mexican and US legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks in order to define and apply the highest standard possible to disaster response and community resilience.

There was a strong consensus at the meeting that it is important to expedite progress 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
18 September 2019**