



Advice to Council No: 19-03

JPAC Expert Forum on Community-based Approaches to Disaster Resilience

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 Puerto Rico, Territory of the United States, on 24 October 2019, highlighting examples of community resilience throughout North America, including the significant efforts currently underway in the three countries, Canada, Mexico, and the United States, 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 the stories we heard from people during the forum in San Juan about the frustration, anger, hurt and trauma in the wake of Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria in September 2017;

RECALLING ALSO the stories of hope, resilience, tenacity, ingenuity and hard work we heard during the forum from people working to meet the social and economic challenges facing communities in Puerto Rico, such as Toro Negro and Caño Martín Peña;

EMPHASIZING that Canada, Mexico and the United States, as United Nations member states, have endorsed a series of instruments that collectively call on countries to take urgent climate action, promote sustainable development, and strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of communities to respond to climate-related hazards and natural disasters, including: (a) the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C* (SR15)¹, (b) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development², and (c) the New Urban Agenda³;

¹ IPCC, 2018: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.)], available from <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>.

² United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1 (25 September 2015), available from <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/70/1>.

³ United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/256, *New Urban Agenda*, A/RES/71/256 (23 December 2016), available from <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/71/256>.

SUBMITS the following recommendations for Council’s consideration:

1. The Council should endorse the JPAC’s public meeting formula and apply it to Council sessions. Four key elements comprise the JPAC approach to public meetings:

- Match the issue being investigated with a place that has appropriate experience with that issue.
- Prioritize unscripted public dialogue and exchange of knowledge.
- Divide the meeting into two parts: (1) an interactive session, and (2) a site visit that showcases real-world examples of the issues people are facing.
- Feature and then integrate wisdom and experiences of Indigenous and local communities.

2. By June 2020, the Council should identify, fund and announce three community-based renewable energy generation projects, one in each jurisdiction—Canada, Mexico and the United States. Successful execution of community-based energy projects requires attention to the following:

- Secure adequate, timely and necessary funding for each pilot project from its respective national government.
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing opportunities: (a) among the pilot project communities (communities that have successfully implemented renewable generation projects, such as the Toro Negro community), and subject matter experts, including the TEK Expert Group, during the pilot project execution phase, (b) among public officials who worked on related policies and on the implementation of such pilot projects, and then (c) share with the general public all learning generated by the pilot projects.
- Provide sufficient administrative and governance support necessary to the pilot project communities.

3. By June 2020, the Council should establish a working group to assess the feasibility of government-sponsored and private insurance programs to support communities recovering from natural disasters.

4. By December 2020, the Council should initiate a special investigation to understand the relationship between cultural resilience and community-based disaster preparedness. The following topics should be considered during the investigation:

- Examination of disaster resilience in both urban and remote settings, along with trilateral opportunities for planning harmonization (i.e., disaster prevention, emergency environmental disaster impacts, coordination with civil society, etc.).
- Documenting and assessing the most common reforms put in place to achieve community-based disaster resilience.
- Evaluating the impacts that language, culture, and active stewardship have in community-based disaster resilience.

**Approved by the JPAC members
19 December 2019**