

**TWENTY-SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF THE COUNCIL
Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)**

**14-15 July 2014
Boston, Mass., United States**

SUMMARY RECORD

The Council held its Twenty-Second Regular Session on 14–15 July 2015, in Boston, Massachusetts, United States. Gina McCarthy, Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) chaired the meeting. Rodolfo Lacy Tamayo, Deputy Secretary for Planning and Environment Policy, Environment and Natural Resources (Semarnat), and Leona Aglukkaq, Canadian Environment Minister, represented Mexico and Canada, respectively. Irasema Coronado, CEC Executive Director, represented the Secretariat. Nathalie Daoust, Council Secretary, acted as secretary for the Session. Other delegates were also in [attendance](#).

Council Public Meeting

Item 4 Welcome introduction by the Council

Item 4.1 US Council member

Administrator McCarthy welcomed her colleagues and the public to the session. She expressed the CEC's intention to work collaboratively to achieve sustainable solutions and pursue the objectives laid out in the Strategic Plan 2015–2020 and the Operational Plan 2015–2016. She welcomed comments from the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) members and the public for consideration in the work of the CEC and she mentioned the importance of addressing the cross-cutting issues described in the Strategic Plan, in particular, those related to vulnerable communities.

Item 4.2 Canadian Council member

Minister Aglukkaq expressed appreciation for being at the meeting and emphasized the importance of public engagement and input in the work of the CEC.

Item 4.3 Mexican Council member

Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo thanked JPAC for providing highly relevant recommendations, and the executive director for her work. He mentioned that the years ahead were critical in terms of international agreement on climate change and biodiversity, two topics for which the CEC has become a global reference.

Item 5 Report from the executive director on accomplishments under the 2010–2015 Strategic Plan and introduction to next item: Council announcements

Executive Director Coronado provided an overview of the CEC's accomplishments under the Strategic

Plan 2010–2015, and emphasized the important role of the CEC in meeting the Parties’ international and domestic commitments on the environment. She mentioned a number of projects that have been completed during the 2010–2015 period, including access to real-time air quality data using the AirNow-International model, improved sustainability of grassland ecosystems, improved resilience in the Big Bend-Río Bravo region, leading-edge science in blue carbon habitats, improved indoor air quality in Alaskan communities, options to reduce air pollution at land border crossing, reduced impact in the truck and bus manufacturing sector; improved management of spent-lead acid batteries and hybrid and e-vehicle batteries, continued work on the sound management of chemicals, and support for the North American working group on environmental enforcement. She felt that these accomplishments demonstrate that the CEC is enduring, evolving, and continues to be relevant. She added that the topic of “Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience” underscored the relevance of the CEC in addressing the most pressing environmental issues of the day.

She also acknowledged the work of the Secretariat staff and the working groups, experts and government officials involved in CEC work. She invited participants who wish to learn more about the projects to visit the CEC projects exhibition [in the Council Session lobby], “Working Together for the North American Environment.” She [highlighted other accomplishments of the CEC](#), including the NAPECA grant program and its commitment to grassroots initiatives to achieve meaningful results, the full review of Secretariat policies, the greater outreach of the Submission on Enforcement Matters process, the creation of performance measures to track the CEC’s impact, and the overall increase in outreach activities. Finally, she thanked the Council and JPAC members for their work and expressed appreciation for having had the privilege to serve as executive director, working with the staff, the Council, JPAC members, and stakeholders across North America.

Item 6 Council announcements

Item 6.1 Endorsement of the Strategic Plan 2015–2020 and Operational Plan 2015–2016

6.1.1 Introduction by US Council member

Administrator McCarthy thanked the executive director for her work and leadership, and the successes shown in the presentation. She also thanked all those involved in developing the Strategic Plan 2015–2020 and the Operational Plan 2015–2016. She then mentioned that the Plan represented their common interests and recognized the importance of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Finally, she added that the Plan should also be seen as a sustainable economic strategy for North America.

6.1.2 Comment from Canadian Council member

Minister Aglukkaq thanked the executive director for her hard work, emphasizing that the results presented provided evidence that the CEC was making an impact. She added that the work on performance measures was important for Canada to better communicate results and the overall difference that the CEC was making. Minister Aglukkaq listed the three priorities of the Strategic Plan 2015–2020: climate change mitigation and adaptation, green growth, and healthy communities and ecosystems. She mentioned that the Strategic Plan will help build on the accomplishments made to date and complement current work in each country. She added she was particularly pleased about the projects related to mitigating the impacts of climate change in communities and the forest sector. She

recalled that traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) had been made a priority topic at the 2014 Council Session and at the Arctic Council and, as a result, was pleased that several projects in the new Operational Plan were incorporating it. Lastly, Minister Aglukkaq encouraged the use of performance measures to better communicate CEC results, and the efforts to identify opportunities to engage stakeholders, especially communities.

6.1.3 Comment from Mexican Council member

Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo provided comments on the OP 2015-2016. He first thanked Canada and the US for their responsiveness to Mexico's concerns regarding the monarch butterfly, as reflected by several projects in the Operational Plan. He also highlighted project 9, focused on strengthening conservation and sustainable production of selected CITES species, which addresses community resource management, a topic of great relevance for Mexico. Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo also welcomed projects 6 and 7, focused on continuing the support for decreasing pollution from maritime transportation in coastal regions. He mentioned that the CEC will help create a better future for the oceans. Lastly, he congratulated the executive director and her team for the results achieved, and expressed his pride in being part of the CEC.

The Strategic Plan 2015–2020 and Operational Plan 2015–2016 were endorsed by the three Council members.

Item 6.2 Presentation of Roster of TEK experts

6.2.1 General introduction and presentation of Canadian TEK experts by the Canadian Council member

Minister Aglukkaq welcomed the valuable contribution of the TEK experts to the CEC and expressed her gratitude that Canada and the US shared similar views. She shared the story of explorer Roald Amundsen, whose learning of traditional survival techniques during his time spent in Gjoa Haven, Nunavut, allowed him to successfully carry out his explorations in the Arctic, and ultimately to reach the South Pole. She mentioned that the story was an example of the added value of TEK for the broader community. She also stressed the importance of interacting with representatives of traditional groups instead of studying them from afar, and suggested that TEK and science be used together to make better decisions. Minister Aglukkaq introduced each Canadian TEK expert: Kathy Hodgson-Smith, Melissa Hotain, Donna Hurlburt, Leah Muckpah and Norman Sterriah.

6.2.2 Introduction to Mexican TEK experts by Mexican Council member

Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo explained there were over 62 indigenous groups in Mexico and that their link with nature was strong. He added that in developing the list of experts, Mexico had consulted with the *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas*, the *Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad*, and the *Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas*. Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo then introduced each Mexican TEK expert: Citlalli López Binnqüist, Cessia Esther Chuc Uc, Concepción Díaz Pérez, Amelia Reyna Monteros Guijón, and Antonieta Zárate Toledo.

6.2.3 Introduction to US TEK experts by US Council member (3 min.)

Administrator McCarthy explained that the TEK experts would provide a model on how to integrate TEK and add a layer of robustness and richness to the work of the CEC. She introduced each US TEK expert: Sarah James, Lynn Malerba, Henrietta Mann, Christopher Peters, and Gail Small.

Item 6.3 Launch of NAPECA Call for Proposals by US Council member on behalf of the Council

Administrator McCarthy highlighted that a total of 2.7 million dollars had been used to date to fund 36 community projects through the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA), supporting Council's priorities, and that this year the Council had set aside 1.3 million dollars for the third round of NAPECA grants. She explained that the grant program fulfilled a need to engage cooperatively and showcase shared environmental stewardship across North America. She added that the program was created to encourage innovation, flexibility, and promote models of environmental initiatives that can be replicated to build long-term partnerships that will improve environmental conditions in local and indigenous communities all across North America. Administrator McCarthy encouraged all participants to visit the CEC projects exhibition to learn more about NAPECA and Operational Plan projects. She announced that the NAPECA 2015–2016 call for proposals was officially open.

Item 7 Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience

Item 7.1 Introduction by Gina McCarthy, Administrator, US Environmental Protection Agency

Administrator McCarthy mentioned that the morning session had allowed them to look back and celebrate the work that the CEC had accomplished, as well as look forward to the work ahead. She pointed to one of the new strategic priorities in 2015–2020, climate change adaptation and resilience, and explained that extreme climatic events were taking place all across the US. Climate impacts were also affecting public health, safety and national security all around the world. She explained that this afternoon session would focus on how the countries will support regional and country-specific adaptation efforts to increase community resilience to climate impacts.

Item 7.2 Remarks by Leona Aglukkaq, Canadian Environment Minister

Minister Aglukkaq mentioned that climate change adaptation and mitigation was an important topic for Canadians and that the government was strongly engaged in natural heritage and climate change adaptation and resilience. She reiterated Canada's commitment to reducing, by 2030, greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below 2005 levels, and pointed to new regulations to reduce emissions across sectors as well as the plan to invest in transformative and innovative technology to reduce the environmental footprint of growing sectors in Canada. She added that Canada had invested \$235 million dollars since 2006 in climate change adaptation actions, including the Adaptation Policy Framework, the development of tools to adapt infrastructure, the strengthening of national standards, assistance to indigenous communities to better assess climate change vulnerability for adaptation plan,

as well as heat-alert systems to support vulnerable populations. She mentioned that the strength of the CEC is that it complements domestic programs in each country. She indicated she was looking forward to sharing Canada's work on vulnerability assessment and adaptive planning with the CEC Council—adding that Canada will also benefit from lessons learned about extreme heat warning systems. She reiterated the need to incorporate TEK, via the roster of experts, into the work of the CEC and Canada's experience with such initiative. She commented on the uniqueness of the North American region, and welcomed the incorporation of such public engagement mechanism in the Strategic Plan, specifically the cross-cutting theme of learning from and assisting vulnerable groups to help the CEC expand its collective knowledge base. Minister Aglukkaq added that the Strategic Plan demonstrated the value of regional cooperation in addressing global environmental challenges and that she was looking forward to working with the CEC on such important issues.

Item 7.3 Remarks by Rodolfo Lacy Tamayo, Mexican Deputy Secretary for Planning and Environment Policy, Environment and Natural Resources

Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo provided an overview of Mexico's national climate change strategy and the actions put forward by several agencies to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change, including: the development of a carbon tax, an emission registry and a carbon market; increasing resilience of vulnerable communities via adaptation first, then mitigation measures; increasing the disaster fund for prevention and preparedness; and regulating land use in high-risk areas. He explained further that all actions would take into account watersheds and reforestation of protected natural areas. He emphasized that community engagement would be done through the establishment of the national civil protection system that would be activated before disasters and supported by risk maps for community leaders. Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo also mentioned the importance of integrating the management of the North American coastal zones—particularly for species' migration and ecosystems. He explained that another aspect of the Strategy was the creation of new infrastructure with the engagement of private sector by, for example, increasing water infrastructure and resilience in cities of over one million habitants, as well as initiatives for greenhouse gas and pollution reduction.

Item 7.4 Remarks by Gina McCarthy, Administrator, US Environmental Protection Agency

Administrator McCarthy thanked Canada and Mexico for sharing their work and explained that adaptation to climate change is an opportunity to open up pathways to a sustainable economic future if the North American countries embrace those challenges and work cooperatively. She provided an overview of US initiative related to adaptation and mitigation to climate change: pollution reduction efforts, including in the heavy- and light-duty vehicle sector; studies on the impacts of hydrological fracking and oil and gas exploration; methane emission regulation; and actions to reduce hydrofluorocarbon emissions, ozone-depleting substances, and greenhouse gas emissions from the aviation sector and from landfills. She commented that the energy world was in transition, and that the focus of her work is to adapt and protect citizens and those most vulnerable, not only from carbon pollution, but also from overall pollution sources and climate change. Administrator McCarthy mentioned the capacity building work for state, local and tribal officials to build on successful adaptation strategies that have been taking place elsewhere at the regional scale. She added that her government offered programs and investments to adapt to climate change and improve the way things were done in a cost-effective way for roads, sewers, brownfields, and housing infrastructure, among

others. She commented that cost savings were an opportunity to drive those changes. Lastly, she reflected on the Pope's statement that tackling climate change was an opportunity and a moral responsibility, and stressed that her goal is to hand kids a clean and healthy future. She thanked her Council colleagues for collaborating on initiatives that can make these changes happen.

Item 8 Moderated discussion on Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience

Gustavo Alanís-Ortega welcomed the participants to the public section of the Council Session, which, he said, was an opportunity to participate and exchange with the Council members on the topic of climate change adaptation and resilience. Mr. Alanís-Ortega reminded his hearers that remote participants could send their questions by email, Facebook and Twitter.

Magdalena Muir provided a summary of the recommendations developed during the JPAC Networking Session. She underscored the following ideas: climate action is necessary and it should be focused on vulnerable communities; economic resources are required; there is a need to connect climate to social change, e.g., vulnerable populations and beyond; greater environmental compliance is required, combined with improved training; private investment, business involvement, and innovation is needed and should be encouraged; prevention of problems at the source is needed since governments are not always addressing their root cause, for example, the protection and clean up of supplies for potable water; water management needs to be integrated across multi-level jurisdictions and comprise the entire system from source to end use; ground water and watershed management needs to use best practices to protect water at the source and upstream; and cost-benefit analyses of green infrastructure should include considerations of indigenous use.

María Guadalupe Hernández Balderas provided additional recommendations developed during the JPAC Networking Session, including: implement integrated land-use planning that integrates TEK and local institutions, ecological zoning regulations, assessment tools and programs, and public participation; foster strong, ethical and transparent public participation to increase the impact of proposed resource management programs and improved ecosystem adaptation; inform society and build capacity to involve citizens and authorities in decision-making to find the best solutions and reduce corruption. She added that political will was a fundamental element to prevent citizens alone from having to bear the responsibility of protecting the common good.

Irmin Ernesto Orta Corona from the Mexico City hub asked what the [Mexican] national budget for adaptation programs was. In response, Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo stated that overall, \$70 billion pesos were set aside for this purpose and a budget was currently being developed to determine resource allocation specifically on this topic. He added that the Climate Change Fund also included a budget for adaptation (50%) and mitigation (50%). Administrator McCarthy mentioned that the US also had an adaptation budget and incorporated adaptation considerations across all government departments with an overall budget of approximately \$2 billion dollars. She added that they were working on building in adaptation into decision-making across all government activities and in leveraging private investments and strengthening regulation to adapt to future energy needs, among others. Minister Aglukkaq highlighted how important it was for the CEC to share lessons learned. She stated that Canada had set aside \$235 million dollars for domestic adaptation initiatives, the adaptation policy framework and the adaptation platform to bring together several departments to understand climate-related risks and make better policy decisions. Minister Aglukkaq mentioned Canada's effort to reduce greenhouse gas

emissions and promote clean energy (e.g., banning coal-fired power plants) via investing in innovation and technology to promote unique solutions.

Linda Riva Palacio Flóres asked how the Council could encourage communication channels to promote and share research carried out in academic, government and other circles. Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo answered that he supported the idea of information management and transparency on questions of climate management via modernizing the information generated daily. He mentioned that the Internet and social media were useful vehicles for disseminating information, especially in case of climate-related emergency, but also recognized that other communication channels were required, such as more organic, in-person organizations. He mentioned disaster-preparedness emergency drills. Administrator McCarthy supported the importance of connecting students and governments, and highlighted the importance of the NAPECA program for governments to learn from the ground. She also mentioned the importance of internships to create future leaders and broaden the horizon of an organization, and the power of social media to increase engagement. Administrator McCarthy mentioned several other initiatives, including developing opportunities to deal effectively with environmental justice issues, such as the eco-ambassador program that provides support for tribal groups. She stressed the importance of marrying needs with opportunities and building new generations of environmental leaders. Minister Aglukkaq commented that communication technology was changing constantly. She encouraged young people to analyze and question the information they read and to use it effectively and through different lens as, for example, in this forum with TEK. She emphasized that we needed great minds to deal with future challenges.

Peter Stoett from the Montreal hub shared his concern regarding the growing threat to biodiversity from invasive species, and to resource-based communities from climate change. He asked if the Council would institute a continent-wide collaborative policy to prevent the spread of invasive species and their migration. Minister Aglukkaq answered that she had hosted a national event on species-at-risk to increase collaboration across jurisdictions. Collaboration on polar bear population research was also set up with other Nordic countries, integrating scientific information with TEK. She also mentioned that there had been an agreement signed by Canada, Mexico and the US on the monarch butterfly. Administrator McCarthy mentioned that EPA had published a risk analysis report on climate impacts on invasive species, addressing shifts in species' distribution and direct public health impacts. Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo mentioned that the Mexican Commission for the Protection against Sanitary Risks (*Comisión Federal para la Protección contra Riesgos Sanitarios—Cofepris*) had been carrying out monitoring of migrating disease-bearing insects (vectors) due to climate change, and acknowledged the impacts of this issue on agriculture and other sectors. He added that his government was working on establishing biological corridors to support species' migration.

Jennifer McIntyre from the Seattle hub expressed concern about the growing contamination and toxicity on aquatic wildlife of aromatic hydrocarbons from non-point source emissions and urban runoff. She added that green infrastructure can help reduce pollution from urban runoff, but not enough was being done on a landscape scale; pollution reduction must happen at the source. She asked what the government could do through regulation or fostering green chemistry to protect humans and aquatic animals. Administrator McCarthy answered that the next challenge was going to be stormwater management, which is an opportunity to improve green infrastructure, innovation and new technology. She added that gasoline was a toxic substance and that there were opportunities for the US to switch to alternative vehicles and cleaner fuel types. Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo added that there was a need

to regulate persistent organic pollutants from vehicles and chemicals. Water treatment systems, more specifically combined systems, required more sophisticated processes, which was something his government was working on. Finally, Minister Aglukkaq mentioned Canada's [Chemicals Management Plan](#), which deals with chemicals in drinking water systems, and their efforts to regulate vehicles and heavy-duty fuels, as part of a sector-by-sector approach to mitigate impacts. Administrator McCarthy pointed out that stormwater runoff was also of concern in rural areas and contributed to toxic algal blooms, which are present in Lake Champlain and Lake Erie. Administrator McCarthy added that they were working with the Great Lakes initiative to develop monitoring systems able to detect algal blooms before they affect the water supply.

Barbara Fullarton from the Dartmouth hub asked how Council saw traditional ecological knowledge being applied in land- and marine-use plans in First Nations or aboriginal communities and how the Council will engage with these communities and governments. Minister Aglukkaq reiterated the importance of TEK for her and the complementarity of TEK and science for better decision-making. The TEK roster and the framework that was announced today is a way to implement the initiative of the Arctic Council on the ground and engage with local communities to gather meaningful information. Minister Aglukkaq added that efforts were made at the international level to determine how TEK and science can complement each other in the work on climate change and wildlife management. Administrator McCarthy emphasized that she wanted to make sure that decision-making, policies and programs actually respect tribal and First Nation cultures and values. She added that the way the CEC will consider the advice of the TEK experts will be up to them to determine.

François Simard explained that he founded a company that extracts milkweed fibers grown in Canada and the US to create various products, such as insulation material for clothing and cars, and oil absorbing materials, as alternatives to petroleum and synthetic products. His business creates jobs and benefits the environment, including providing habitat for the monarch butterfly. He explained that the demand for milkweed fiber was so high that they had to deploy tens of hectares in Canada and now in Vermont (and welcomes Mexican farmers to join them). He mentioned that this new agribusiness sector had great market potential, but also posed some challenges, including recruitment of farmers due to the initial three-year growth period, during which farmers did not receive income. He asked if the CEC would make recommendations for the three countries to help farmers and others cultivate milkweed in North America. Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo answered that this initiative was an excellent proposal and a good spin-off of past CEC efforts to support monarch populations. He added that Mexico would analyze the proposal to consider it as a possible solution to the monarch problem within the subsidies program. Minister Aglukkaq mentioned the existing trilateral work plan for the monarch butterfly and added that she would consider his proposal for consideration at the North America scale.

Norma Miller from the Vancouver hub asked if the CEC could be willing to develop standards and best practices to be used in flood mapping or if that would rather be handled nationally. Administrator McCarthy mentioned that flood mapping was done at a local scale and needed to be updated constantly. She pointed out the need to use the information on floods for protecting and maintaining the resource that communities depend on and for mapping coastal zones at risk. Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo mentioned that there were applications for accurately monitoring and visualizing flood areas, and that a Google map would likely be realized (if not already in place). Minister Aglukkaq mentioned that Environment Canada was working with provinces, territories, the Department of Fisheries and

Oceans, and others on such mapping initiatives.

James Gillis, who was involved in the NAPECA project with the K'ómoks First Nation, asked how his community could become more involved (via the TEK roster) and receive funding. Minister Aglukkaq mentioned that the third round of NAPECA grants had been announced this morning and that this project was a great example for engaging First Nation communities and increasing habitat stewardship. Administrator McCarthy added that the TEK experts expressed their intent to provide advice on the new projects soon, which will be an opportunity for First Nation groups to provide input. Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo mentioned that the Mexican Global Green fund would soon start selecting projects focused on adaptation; however, he wasn't certain if projects from the US were allowed.

Angeles Mendoza-Sammet asked, by email, what work was planned to promote shared water governance and management across North America for protecting watersheds and engaging citizens. Administrator McCarthy mentioned that the Council recognized that water didn't respect political boundaries and that they were already working binationally and trinationally to develop strong partnerships and solutions to protect water. She commented further on the importance of focusing more heavily on water and tackling problems such as contributors to marine environmental pollution, like plastics and other debris, as a way of increasing the visibility of actions the CEC might take. She added that the CEC should not have such a broad and high-up approach, but rather one that makes a visible difference.

Gustavo Alanís-Ortega thanked the public for their questions and comments and for such a constructive dialogue.

Council Session Closing

Item 9 Signing of Council Resolution and Ministerial Statement

Administrator McCarthy thanked everyone, including her colleagues at the US EPA New England Regional office, for a productive meeting, emphasizing how inspiring it was to see such leadership in North America and encouraged continued focus moving forward with the Strategic Plan 2015–2020 and its three main strategic objectives. She said that confronting these challenges was necessary and would bring countries together in order to show North American leadership and our respective leaders' abilities to protect public health and the environment in ways that will contribute to growing our economies. Cooperation is the way it is going to happen, she said. Administrator McCarthy continued by thanking her colleagues and emphasized that no country alone could solve the environment problems we all share. She added that the Council members would make sure that cooperation continues.

Each Council member signed Council Resolution 15-04, establishing funding for the CEC for 2016, as well as the following Ministerial Statement:

CEC Ministerial Statement – 2015

Twenty-second Regular Session of the CEC Council

Boston, MA, United States, 15 July 2015—We, the governing Council of the Commission for

Environmental Cooperation (CEC), met in Boston, one of North America's model green cities, to celebrate the long-standing environmental cooperation among our three countries: Canada, Mexico and the United States.

This meeting was particularly timely, as Council members endorsed a blueprint that will guide our work under the CEC for the next five years. In order to make the CEC more relevant, we are bringing new perspectives from our local and indigenous communities and learning from their knowledge to make better environmental management decisions.

Our 22nd annual Regular Session focused on the theme of *Climate Adaptation and Resilience* and gave us the opportunity to interact with the CEC's Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) and civil society to share success stories on the innovative strategies, tools and initiatives that can help our communities better address the effects of climate change.

CEC Strategic Plan 2015–2020

In Boston, we endorsed the CEC's Strategic Plan for 2015–2020, which builds on our efforts from the past five years. Collaboration amongst the North American partners is of paramount importance. The plan presents our shared priorities in working through the CEC to complement key domestic and international initiatives taken by each of our governments on addressing environmental challenges.

The strategic priorities for the next five years are: climate change mitigation and adaptation, green growth, and sustainable communities and ecosystems. Our strategic priorities and guiding cross-cutting themes build on more than 20 years of trilateral cooperation. Through the CEC, we are better able to address pressing environmental challenges that require a coordinated regional and international response.

Looking toward the future, we discussed the possibility of using the CEC as a vehicle for regional cooperation to address the nexus between the climate change and other important issues such as water quantity and quality, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and oceans.

CEC Operational Plan 2015–2016

Today, we also reaffirmed the CEC's Operational Plan for 2015–2016, which is focused on producing tangible outcomes and measurable results to deliver on our strategic vision. The plan describes the CEC activities proposed for the next two years, including 16 new projects that bring together our experts on work such as exploring the benefits of blue carbon in the environment, supporting chemicals management, developing a North American approach to marine protected area management, and reducing maritime shipping emissions, as well as improving the conservation status of migratory birds that breed in the Arctic, and strengthening monarch butterfly and pollinator conservation.

NAPECA

We launched the third cycle of a two-year grant program that supports environmental action at the community level. We allocated C\$1.325 million of the CEC budget to support the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA). This will ensure that the NAPECA continues to fund innovative community-based projects that engage indigenous communities, nongovernmental organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to address local environmental challenges. We welcome NAPECA project proposals that focus on sustainable communities or urban initiatives that have measurable objectives and benefits to local communities.

Joint Public Advisory Committee

We acknowledge and greatly appreciate the contributions to North American environmental stewardship made by the members of JPAC, and their renewed efforts to reach out to civil society on issues that matter to them. JPAC's role is vital in keeping the CEC as a global model for trilateral cooperation.

In conjunction with the Council meeting, JPAC held a session on the theme of how green infrastructure and land-use planning are important tools for communities in adapting to a changing climate and managing excess stormwater. JPAC heard from members of the public through an open forum and workshop. The public provided valuable input for the Council to consider in finding trilateral solutions for environmental issues that face us today.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) provides a critical and integral contribution to environmental decision-making. This is why we are pleased to announce the creation of a Roster of Experts on TEK from Canada, Mexico and the United States. The 15 distinguished members of the roster—five from each country—will advise the Council through JPAC on opportunities to apply TEK to the CEC's operations and policy recommendations. This is the first traditional ecological knowledge panel to be named to a trilateral organization such as the CEC.

We established the Roster to demonstrate our commitment made at last year's annual session held in Yellowknife, Canada, to work effectively with local and indigenous communities across our continent.

Executive Director

We extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to CEC Executive Director Irasema Coronado for her leadership and longstanding dedication to the CEC, which goes back in various roles to the very beginning of this unique organization.

Conclusion

We look forward to meeting next year in Mexico and working closely with JPAC, the TEK Roster of Experts, and all of the stakeholders and members of civil society who ensure that the CEC stays relevant in its third decade as a model of trilateral cooperation on the North American environment.

Item 10 Closing Remarks by Minister Aglukkaq

Minister Aglukkaq thanked the US team for their hospitality and for organizing the meeting. She also thanked the Secretariat staff, the interpreters, and the TEK experts, hoping to showcase this approach to the global community. She also wished her best to Irasema Coronado.

Item 11 Concluding Remarks and Passing the Torch by Administrator McCarthy

Administrator Gina McCarthy announced that Mexico will be chairing the CEC Council for the next year.

Item 12 New Council Chair and Announcement of 2016 Council Session by Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo

Deputy Secretary Lacy Tamayo thanked the US for bringing the Council members and all the attendees to this wonderful location for such a productive meeting and added that it was an honor for him to have participated with Minister Aglukkaq and Administrator McCarthy. On behalf of Secretary Guerra Abud, he wanted to congratulate the initiatives from Canada and the US in elevating the performance of the CEC. Mr. Lacy Tamayo expressed his support for Irasema Coronado as executive director and thanked the members of JPAC, especially Gustavo Alanís-Ortega, for their expertise and enthusiastic involvement in the work of the CEC. He then announced that the next Regular Session of the CEC Council (in summer 2016) would be taking place in Zacatecas, Mexico (subject to confirmation).

With that, the Twenty-Second Regular Session of the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation was officially adjourned.