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Executive Summary

This document summarizes the conclusions of two reports prepared for the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) by the Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG) of Lexington, Massachusetts. The purpose of the reports was to assess how well the CEC's cooperative work program responded to the CEC's 2005–2010 Strategic Plan and to make recommendations for improving the CEC's measurement framework under its next (2010–2015) Strategic Plan. The CEC had tasked ERG with four objectives:

- To prepare a report on results and accomplishments the CEC has made in fulfillment of the 2005–2010 Strategic Plan in time for the June 2009 CEC meeting,
- To review and evaluate in a comprehensive manner the performance of CEC projects in meeting the goals and objectives identified in the Strategic Plan,
- To provide the Council, the CEC Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), and the CEC Secretariat with an analytical foundation for building the 2010–2015 Strategic Plan, and
- To assist the Council and Secretariat in concluding its ongoing work of refining the monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework.

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation: Results and Performance from 2005–2010, Recommendations for 2010–2015

Meeting the Vision and Objectives of the 2005–2010 Strategic Plan

In June 2004, the CEC Council (the top environmental officials from Canada, Mexico and the United States) signed the Puebla Declaration, setting forth the Parties' vision for the CEC over the next decade. Taking the Puebla Declaration as a mandate, four attributes were identified, defining the CEC as:

- A catalyst for actions to benefit the North American environment
- A forum to facilitate regional action
- A producer of concrete results
- A provider of scientifically rigorous information

To implement this vision, the CEC developed a five-year strategic plan for 2005–2010 and structured the plan around three broad priorities: information for decision-making, capacity building, and trade and the environment. To advance these priorities, Canada, Mexico and the United States embraced specific five-year goals and objectives, and formulated long-term cooperative initiatives to meet those goals and objectives. These initiatives comprised a focused, integrated and coherent effort to produce visible and concrete results. The CEC developed and performed projects under its cooperative program each year from 2005 to the present to operationalize the initiatives.

ERG reviewed the extent to which the CEC has met the goals and objectives of the Puebla Declaration and the Strategic Plan and the extent to which CEC projects have met their stated outcomes. The result of our review are summarized on the following page.

ERG prepared two full reports for the CEC:

Assessing the Commission for Environmental Cooperation's (CEC's) Results and Performance: Report on the Accomplishments of the CEC Under the 2005–2010 Strategic Plan

Recommendations for Improving the Commission for Environmental Cooperation's Performance Measurement Structure Under Its 2010–2015 Strategic Plan

Both reports are available, in English only, from: www.cec.org/strategicplan2010

The CEC's work over the last four years has met the vision of the Puebla Declaration, as set forth in the Strategic Plan. The data and information ERG collected shows that the CEC has been a catalyst, has created a forum for regional action, has produced concrete results, and has provided scientifically rigorous information. However, additional work is needed to clarify the extent to which CEC efforts can and should produce concrete results in terms of policy change at each the three Parties, and to ensure that the information provided by the CEC is presented in the most appropriate format for the target audience.

The CEC has successfully performed all of the initiatives described in the Strategic Plan. The Plan identifies these initiatives as the necessary precursors to attaining the goals and objectives under the CEC's three priorities. These initiatives were organized under three goals: information for decision-making, capacity building, and trade and the environment. The table below describes aspects where CEC excelled under each goal.

Projects performed by the CEC have resulted in a number of key accomplishments, including:

- Inspiring significant reductions in costs, CO₂ emissions, water use, and waste by companies participating in the Greening Supply Chains project.
- Developing and implementing an ecological reporting system to describe and synthesize the status and trends of water quality, habitat and living resources in protected areas of the Baja-to-Bering region of the North American Marine Protected Areas Network
- Creating the North American Environmental Atlas, a Web-based digital framework for visualizing continent-wide environmental issues, and illustrating the inter-connectedness of North American ecosystems.
- Supporting the establishment of and improvements to a mandatory RETC (*Registro de Emisiones y Transferencia de Contaminantes*) in Mexico and, with seamless and reliable information from each country, supporting public access to pollution reporting and transfer information throughout North America through continuing publication of *Taking Stock*.

- Conducting a comprehensive assessment of North American air emissions inventories and ambient air monitoring networks, and supporting updates to the Mexican National Emissions Inventory (MNEI).
- Preparing a North American Air Quality Management Strategy to support effective and comparable air quality management practices across borders.
- Establishing North America as a model of trilateral cooperation in law enforcement through training and information exchange on wildlife enforcement and inspection, ozone-depleting substances, and enforcement in the judiciary.
- Improving Mexico's capacity to generate scientific information through both the Sound Management of Chemicals and the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment projects.
- Establishing cooperative initiatives to reduce and monitor mercury pollution, including the health care sector, which have supported a general reduction in mercury levels in North America.
- Working with the Parties to obtain the deregistration of lindane as a pesticide in North America. Furthermore, through the CEC's capacity building efforts, lindane has been promoted by Mexico for inclusion on the new substances list of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.
- Assisting Mexico in developing a national inventory of chemicals that will

add to a North American database of chemicals in commerce compatible with the US Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA), and *Ley General del Equilibrio Ecológico y la Protección al Ambiente* (LGEEPA).

Most CEC projects attained their stated outcomes under the Strategic Plan. In some cases, though, this was not the case. When it was not, the failure to do so could generally be attributed to unforeseen roadblocks (e.g., economic downturn, loss of ad hoc working group), extended timeframes (i.e., cases in which outcomes were far into the future and have not been attained yet), or when projects were too new to have reasonably been expected to attain outcomes. Additionally, the work of the CEC Secretariat is built on a foundation of trilateral consensus and engagement: if officials of one Party cannot participate fully in a project, it may be unable to attain the planned outcomes.

CEC projects have faced a number of challenges during the Strategic Plan timeframe, such as closing out the CEC's involvement in a project while ensuring continuity in project implementation by the Parties or other stakeholders, ensuring initial and continued participation by all of the Parties in trilateral issues, defining the appropriate audience for products, dealing with different political environments in each country, and dealing with different perspectives of the appropriate role for the CEC.

Puebla Priorities and Goals	Aspects where CEC excelled
<p>Information for decision-making—Support better decision-making by providing information on the key environmental challenges and opportunities facing North America</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Facilitating data collection efforts ■ Improving the quality and comparability of trilateral datasets ■ Presenting harmonized information on North American environmental issues
<p>Capacity building—Strengthen the capacities of the three countries to manage environmental issues of common concern.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthening capacity to improve compliance with wildlife laws ■ Improving private sector environmental performance ■ Strengthening capacities to conserve species and habitat of common concern ■ Strengthening the Parties' abilities to assess and manage chemicals of concern
<p>Trade and environment—Promote policies and actions that provide mutual benefits for the environment, trade, and the economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The CEC has continued to make significant contributions to the body of knowledge on the linkages between trade and environment

The New Priorities: Improving Performance Measurement at the CEC Under the 2010–2015 Strategic Plan

On 26 June 2009, at the conclusion of the 16th Regular Session of the CEC Council in Denver, CO, the CEC Council members signed a statement that set the following new priorities for the CEC:

- **Healthy Communities and Ecosystems**
- **Climate Change – Low-Carbon Economy**
- **Greening the Economy in North America**

Recommendations for the Next Five Years

Attaining these priorities will require a concerted effort on the part the CEC and tracking progress toward those priorities will be essential. To that end, ERG has made a number of recommendations to improve the performance measurement structure at the CEC, based on the results of the review of outcome attainment under the 2005–2010 Strategic Plan. In summary, our recommendations are:

- **Recommendation #1** *Develop timelines for project outcomes that reflect (a) the expected timeframes over which outcomes would occur and (b) attainment of outcomes within CEC’s five-year planning cycle to ensure outcomes are contributing to strategic objectives.* In our review of CEC project descriptions, we found that many did not specify the timing of when outcomes would occur. Using timelines helps set measurable goals and objectives for projects that could be achieved within CEC’s five-year planning cycle.
- **Recommendation #2** *Explicitly describe the link between outputs and outcomes in project descriptions.* CEC project descriptions should clearly explain how outputs are expected to contribute to outcomes and ultimately to the CEC’s strategic priorities. During our review of the CEC’s current measurement structure, we observed that these links were often unclear. Thinking about and articulating the link between outputs and outcomes will ensure that the CEC

is tracking the appropriate outputs. Furthermore, the CEC should develop a performance measurement framework that ensures that project outcomes are linked to the priorities defined by the Parties.

- **Recommendation #3** *Explicitly describe the link between performance measures and outcomes in project descriptions.* CEC project descriptions should also describe how performance measures indicate progress towards outcomes. These linkages are crucial for the CEC’s performance measurement structure to move forward.
- **Recommendation #4** *Develop data dictionaries for performance measures.* A performance measurement data dictionary is a tool to define, identify data sources for, and assist in interpreting a measure. It describes the characteristics of a performance indicator and would include a description of the indicator, the “owner” of the indicator, data source, formula for calculation, frequency and indicator type, desired direction of movement, baseline and targets. Use of data dictionaries in the CEC’s performance measurement would improve development and tracking of project performance.
- **Recommendation #5** *Expand the “Lexicon for Results” to include terms commonly used by the CEC and use the Lexicon to ensure a consistent understanding of the intent of outcome statements.* The CEC should revisit and refine the “Lexicon for Results” document created in 2004. ERG recommends adding a few of the

commonly used terms we observed in project descriptions and outcome statements. For example, some of these terms could include: facilitation, cooperation, consensus, access, awareness, understanding, and collaboration. Defining these terms at an organizational level would ensure more consistent use and would assist managers in developing comparable outcome statements.

- **Recommendation #6** *Establish a clear definition of a “project” that separates “mandate activities” from “strategic projects” and recognize that mandated activities may not necessarily contribute to CEC’s Strategic Plan priorities.* There are several elements of the CEC’s work that are mandated by the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC). The CEC should clearly distinguish between activities that are addressing topics related to the CEC’s mandate (i.e., defined by the NAAEC) and strategic projects that reflect trilateral interests and are tailored to support Strategic Plan priorities. Mandate activities and strategic projects have very different time frames and resource needs and would benefit from being understood and viewed as distinct types of work. Furthermore, mandate activities may not necessarily contribute to meeting the strategic priorities.
- **Recommendation #7** *Develop outcomes and performance measures for projects that (a) reflect the evolutionary stage of CEC projects over time and (b) how a project’s stage contributes to CEC strategic priorities.* During our assessment of CEC outcomes under the 2005–2010 Strategic Plan, we found that many projects at CEC evolve through a series of stages. The first stage is usually a scoping or defining stage for the CEC as the Commission identifies its role in a more detailed project. During the second stage, the project has a defined role for CEC that tends to be either a pilot or research project. In the final stage, the project is transitioned to the Parties or closed out. Outcome and performance measures for

projects should reflect a project's stage. Additionally, the performance measures should reflect how a project's stage contributes to meeting CEC priorities.

- **Recommendation #8** *Reduce and/or eliminate the use of “umbrella” projects.* Some CEC projects operate as “umbrella” projects (i.e., the project encompasses many distinct subtasks that can themselves be considered distinct projects). The issue with umbrella projects is that the outcomes of the subtasks are not being given their proper weight in the CEC measurement structure. Specifically, if a subtask is the large enough to be a project, it should be counted as a project. This would assist the CEC in tracking true project-level success. Thus, umbrella projects should be divided into their distinct projects.
- **Recommendation #9** *Avoid double-counting outcomes in sister projects.* Some CEC projects have “sister” projects (two or more projects that are targeted at similar outcomes and goals). The issue with sister projects is that in the CEC's current structure the two projects sometimes share common

outcomes or performance measures, leading to the double-counting of outcomes (i.e., both projects count attainment of the same outcomes). In terms of tracking progress, only one project should be able to claim results for attainment of an outcome.

- **Recommendation #10** *Determine and use consistent time frames for different outcome types.* ERG observed that the timeframe for achievement of outcomes varied widely across projects, posing significant challenges for systematic measurement. If the CEC continues the current three-tiered outcome structure—direct, intermediate, and final—then it should establish a timeframe for each outcome type to ensure measurement consistency between projects. This will ensure a consistent frame of reference across projects and support systematic measurement of achievements.
- **Recommendation #11** *Limit revisions to outcome statements.* Outcome statements should be developed at the start of a project and only be revised when absolutely necessary. Specifically, projects should not need new outcomes every year. A project's intended

outcomes should be identified at the start of the project and then tracked over the course of the project.

- **Recommendation #12** *Develop a few outcome statements per project.* Projects should have only a few (three to seven, optimally) outcome statements. The three-to-seven outcome statements should cover the three levels of outcomes (direct, intermediate, and long-term).
- **Recommendation #13** *Apply the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) criteria when developing outcome statements and performance measures.* The CEC should consistently apply the SMART criteria in developing its outcomes statements and performance measures. ERG has provided detailed instructions on applying the SMART criteria in Section 5.4 of the full report.

About the CEC

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is an international organization created under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) by Canada, Mexico and the United States to address regional environmental concerns and promote the effective enforcement of environmental law. The NAAEC complements the environmental provisions established in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to which it is a side accord.

The CEC accomplishes its work through the combined efforts of its three principal components: the Council, the Secretariat and the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC). The Council is the governing body of the CEC and is composed of the highest-level environmental authorities from each of the three countries. The Secretariat implements the annual work program and provides administrative, technical and operational support to the Council. The Joint Public Advisory Committee is composed of fifteen citizens, five from each of the three countries, and advises the Council on any matter within the scope of the agreement.

For more information, please visit: www.cec.org



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