

**EIGHTEENTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE COUNCIL
Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)**

**21-22 June 2011
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

SUMMARY RECORD

The Council held its Eighteenth Regular Session on 21-22 June 2011, in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Peter Kent, Canadian Minister of the Environment chaired the meeting, Juan Elvira Quesada, Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources and Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) represented Mexico and the United States, respectively. Dolores Wesson on behalf of Evan Lloyd, CEC Executive director, represented the Secretariat. Nathalie Daoust, Council Secretary, acted as secretary for the Session. Other delegates were also in [attendance](#).

Public portion of the Council Session

Item 6 Progress report from the Executive Director

This portion of the meeting was held before the public. Minister Kent welcomed the gathering and reiterated Canada's delight in hosting the Council Session. He reported on a very productive meeting with his counterparts during their in-camera session and indicated he looked forward to an equally productive afternoon.

Item 6.1 Report on accomplishments, and overview of the 2011-2012 Operational Plan

Minister Kent began by explaining how last year had been pivotal and that a strategic plan was now in place focusing on shared environmental challenges. The Council looks forward to hearing about new projects. Noting how, for the last 17 years, the three countries have maintained a strong record of working together, he pointed to public participation as an important factor for this success and thanked the JPAC for their work and for continuing to inform the Council.

Administrator Jackson thanked the Secretariat for the work accomplished to date and offered Evan Lloyd wishes for a speedy recovery.

Secretary Elvira reinforced that the CEC has undergone a crucial phase and that good progress has been achieved. He also underscored the good work of Evan Lloyd and Dolores Wesson.

The chair then invited the director of programs, on behalf of the executive director, to report on CEC accomplishments since the Guanajuato Council Session (as per Rule 5.3 of Council Rules of Procedure). (The presentation can be found [here](#)).

Item 6.2 Update on implementing the Governance Proposal

The director of programs then proceeded to provide an update on steps taken by the executive director since the last Council session to implement the governance proposal. The steps included strengthening the Secretariat support functions, restructuring the CEC budget to maximize the implementation of new policy direction, and the development of a communication strategy. The results of a benchmarking analysis of the CEC's overhead cost structure were also presented. (The presentation can be found [here](#)).

Item 6.3 Comments and questions by Council members

Minister Kent thanked Ms. Wesson for her presentations. He reaffirmed Canada's commitment to the renewal of the CEC and recognized both the leadership of Evan Lloyd and the Secretariat in making significant progress on key aspects of the governance proposal. Canada looks forward to improvements in the Secretariat's governance structures, financial management and accountability while it recognizes that the Secretariat is heading in the right direction, he concluded.

Secretary Elvira recognized the work carried out by Evan Lloyd over the last year and the presentation offered by Ms. Wesson that demonstrates the extensive work carried out by the CEC team. The operational cost analysis, he added, is a very positive undertaking as it helps the three governments make the case that CEC resources have been administered wisely. Moreover, projects undertaken since 2005 have yielded important results that can be shared. The CEC represents a small yet efficient institution that currently benefits from the political support of three governments, and represents an example of how three countries can cooperate together, he stated. He also highlighted among other achievements three projects: 1) the conservation of the monarch butterfly initiated in 2007. As a result, reports indicate that over 98% of the forest habitat of the monarch butterfly in Mexico has been freed from illegal logging activities. Environmental services are also paid to land owners to maintain a healthy livelihood for the monarch butterfly; 2) the conservation of grasslands in the both the US plains and in Northern Mexico. Secretary Elvira pointed out that two years ago Mexico introduced a herd of 60 bison that has now grown to 74 bison moving freely on both sides of the border; 3) the analysis of freight transportation which can assist us in defining ways to reduce carbon emissions in this important sector and leading us towards a cleaner and more sustainable transportation industry.

He concluded that these three projects are examples of how the North American region handles efficiently larger global issues within a small structure such as the CEC. Finally, he pointed out there are institutions, universities, foundations, and research centers in Mexico that can share data and information with the CEC to assist in its work. As the institution evolves, he concluded, it can certainly begin to play a role in the international arena and offer alternative solutions to global matters.

Administrator Jackson thanked Evan Lloyd, Dolores Wesson and the Secretariat staff for the significant accomplishments of the last year. We know and are reminded, she said, that governments cannot and should not be everywhere, particularly as it relates to environmental issues. For this reason, we are strategically focus on building capabilities and capacity in our communities and expanding the government's reach to engage communities in helping the CEC reach the goals of the NAAEC. She conveyed that President Obama understands the importance of trilateral cooperation and the need for the US to work together with its partners to achieve domestic and global environmental goals. Referring to the 2011-12 Operational Plan, she described it as a valuable opportunity to put in practice the principles of open dialogue and create partnerships to support shared environmental goals. As for

the report on the implementation of the governance proposal, she thanked the Secretariat for taking seriously the Council's request for an honest assessment of the organization. She congratulated the Secretariat for finding innovative and smart ways to reduce overhead costs and maximize resources, and commended the efforts underway to enhance accountability and transparency, to reduce costs and ensure better alignment with the Council's priorities. She agreed with the need to be judicious in planning the CEC's work and stressed the importance of using the strategic plan as a guide. She encouraged the Secretariat to continue working closely with the GSC and the other Parties' experts to ensure the focus is maintained and that we are collectively getting the best return on the investment. In this way, she concluded, the CEC can continue to be, as Secretary Elvira mentioned, a small but very mighty model of government working to improve communities.

In closing, Minister Kent added that Canada looked forward to the report on comparative emissions data and inventories. He indicated that efforts in Canada have focused on de-coupling emission rates through sector-by-sector regulations. With regards to the Canadian grasslands, he pointed out that fertility was also blooming and that bison herds in Saskatchewan's national park now comprised between 250-300 bison. Through collaborative work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and through a breeding program of the black-footed ferret, he explained that ferret pairs have also been re-introduced in the grasslands park and have been thriving and multiplying.

Item 7 Highlights of the 2011-2012 Operational Plan Activities

Item 7.1 North American Grasslands: Management Initiatives and Partnerships to Enhance Ecosystem and Community Resilience

The chair invited Garry Donaldson, Assistant Manager, Species Population and Standards Management, Environment Canada, to profile the tasks and activities under this project to enhance ecological integrity and sustainability of North American grassland biodiversity. The presentation highlighted how the project will focus on four key components: 1) the development of unique conservation partnerships; 2) the collection and cataloguing of existing best management practices for beef producers; 3) the assessment of the project, using birds as an indicator; and 4) the economic valuation of healthy native grasslands. (The complementary slide presentation can be found [here](#))

Item 7.2 Big-Bend-Rio/ Bravo Collaboration for Transboundary Landscape Conservation/North American Invasive Species Network

Luis Fueyo, National Commissioner, National Commission of Natural Protected Areas, was invited to profile the work undertaken towards improving ecosystem functioning and increasing the resiliency of 250 river miles of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo (from Ojinaga, Chihuahua, Mexico/Presidio, Texas, USA to Amistad reservoir) and Chihuahuan Desert grasslands in the Big Bend-Rio Bravo region. During his presentation, Mr. Fueyo brought attention to the two main components of the project: 1) the conservation of the biological diversity in the Big Bend-Rio Bravo region; and 2) the extension of data-sharing protocols and best management practices for invasive species. He then proceeded to describe the activities under each component. (The complementary slide presentation can be found [here](#))

Item 7.3 Improving Indoor Air Quality in Alaskan Native Populations and other Indigenous Communities in North America

The chair invited Martha Berger of the Office of Children's Health Protection, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to profile the tasks and activities under this project to improve indoor air quality and reduce the need for respiratory medical care in severely impacted children in Alaskan Native populations and in other indigenous communities in North America. The presentation began by highlighting the severe tribal environmental health issue facing the population of Alaska, then presented other organizations involved, including the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), who will partner with the CEC to implement the project and its four components: 1) measuring the air quality in tribal homes; 2) implementing home-based interventions to reduce air pollutant levels; 3) measuring impact of interventions for decreasing incidence and severity of respiratory symptoms in Alaskan Native children; and 4) sharing methods and results with North American partners. (The complementary slide presentation can be found [here](#))

Item 7.4 Comments and questions by Council members

Administrator Jackson thanked each presenter and noted that the projects presented were good examples of the type of initiatives the Council supports. Speaking on the grasslands project, she pointed out how the conservation of this important ecosystem benefits from strong trilateral support as well as support from the public. Turning to the project on Big Bend/Rio Bravo, she recognized it represented huge undertakings and was aligned with the conservation approach envisioned in the CEC strategic plan. As for the Alaska indoor air quality project, she emphasized that this initiative will show the real value of carrying out a community-based initiative. The lessons, she concluded, will be shared and will be replicable in North America and beyond.

Both Secretary Elvira and Minister Kent also expressed support for the three projects and recognized their worth.

Item 8 Council discussion on the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA)

Reiterating on behalf of the Council the view that addressing environmental problems in North America are often best accomplished by partnering with communities and promoting a sense of shared stewardship for the environment, Minister Kent announced the launching of a new community grant program, NAPECA. He explained that over the next two years, the three countries are directing \$1.4 million into NAPECA. This program will enable citizens, not-for-profit organizations, academics, indigenous and tribal groups and other associations to deliver innovative projects to improve environmental conditions at the local level. Finally, he pointed out that the projects will be chosen according to the environmental priorities and criteria outlined in the CEC's strategic plan and, as such, the Council will be looking for NAPECA projects to improve environmental outcomes throughout North America. In closing, he encouraged the public to visit the CEC website for further details on how to apply.

Item 9 Council public meeting

Irasema Coronado, chair of the CEC Joint Public Advisory Committee opened the public session by inviting presenters to take the floor.

Summary of public oral interventions in order of appearance:

Proposal for an international clean industry certification, by Ricardo Henkel Reyes, *Asociación Industria Limpia del Estado de México*

One of the main duties of each country is to oversee the effective enforcement of its environmental laws, stated Mr. Henkel. This commitment to efficient enforcement is further supported by agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), he added. In this context, the *Asociación Industria Limpia* submitted a proposal to develop a North American Clean Industry Certification Policy for the industrial sector. This certification will help steer production and markets towards a green economy; companies will receive increased social recognition for their positive environmental practices and will be able to participate in a process in which both clients and suppliers receive economic and environmental benefits.

Protecting Ecosystems in the Rural-Urban Interface, Karel Mayrand, David Suzuki Foundation

We tend to think of cities and nature as opposites, but the natural areas surrounding North America's cities abound with ecosystems that are among the most productive on the planet, according to Mr. Mayrand. These ecosystems are also the ones under the most pressure, due in particular to urban sprawl, which converts natural areas into urban areas. The loss of natural areas has consequences not only for the environment but also for the economy of our cities and for our quality of life. Ecosystems add significantly to quality of life, but they also contribute enormously to the economies of cities like Montréal and Toronto. The David Suzuki Foundation, along with Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, conducted an assessment that estimated the total value of ecological goods and services provided by the Ontario green belt around Toronto to be C\$2.6 billion per year, or C\$3,487 per hectare. These amounts represent the value of goods and services that natural areas provide the community, including in particular, flood prevention (wetlands acting as buffer zones), air quality (forests acting as air filters), and nearby farms on high-quality land (lower GHG emissions from grocery products). Such benefits are a significant incentive for public investment in programs and policies to improve natural areas in metropolitan regions. Mr. Mayrand suggested to the Council that the CEC could facilitate information exchange between North American cities on the best methods for evaluating goods and services provided by ecosystems in urban and rural-urban interface areas, and on best practices for protecting them, for encouraging economic analysis of natural capital, and for assessing goods and services in order to assist those who make urban planning decisions. One must consider, he concluded, not only the potential for urban development but also the economic potential of conservation.

The environmental and health impacts of high-tech manufacturing: toxics reduction and other strategies to protect workers and communities, by Sheila Davis, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition

Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition has worked with electronic waste and issues associated with the high tech industry since 1982. As the industry has grown and globalized electronics, the problems associated with them have become global as well, noted Ms. Davis. On behalf of The Silicon Valley Toxic Coalition, she presented two recommendations for the Council on how to handle electronic waste. The first was to engage manufacturers to take responsibility for the life cycle of their

products. When laws and regulations are present, manufacturers tend to comply. Certification, labeling, and life-cycle analysis are examples of programs that can help raising the standards. Secondly, regarding emerging technologies, also known as green tech, the Coalition recommended taking advantage of companies' desire to be identified as "green tech" and their willingness to work in improving their practices, to encourage them to design for recycling, to take back their own products at the end of their life and make a profit out of it, and finally to reduce the toxics used in their products and take responsibility for the life cycle of their products. Many of these technologies use the same processes and chemicals as the electronic industry. Ms. Davis mentioned that both the rapid growth of the green tech industry and their willingness to improve represent areas of opportunity for the Council. Ms. Davis also raised the issue of stopping e-waste dumping overseas, for example in India, Africa and Asia, as it has both serious environmental and social impacts, and exploits the urgent need of many to make a living.

Commercialization of refuse in the State of Guanajuato, by María Guadalupe Hernández Baldera, Guanajuato Environmental Advisory Board and Irapuato Business Coordinating Council

The 2007–2012 National Development Plan of Mexico estimates that 40 million tons of waste are produced in the country each year, 5 to 6 million of which are hazardous waste. "The State of Guanajuato does not have the infrastructure for the sound management of hazardous waste," according to María Guadalupe Hernández. The country's industrial capacity needs to be optimized to include effective management systems that allow for the use, collection and recycling of such waste. "The comprehensive management of this waste poses an opportunity for established markets and supply chains, which will require environmental performance criteria," she said. The problem of hazardous waste in the three countries of North America continues to be pressing, and its solution requires that regulatory developments must go hand in hand with management actions. Besides counting on national inventories, it is urgent to develop a trinational inventory to foster comprehensive waste management through regulatory policies coordinated with the municipal and state authorities. With the proposal to reduce the environmental impact of the waste in Guanajuato, representatives of business sector of the state have put forth a proposal to create a waste commercialization model, linking the federal government, the private sector, the municipalities and the states. Ms. Hernández observed that this model would imply the participation of sponsors, of the CEC as an international advisor, of the business sector, and of an operating agency charged with managing an already established information module.

Maximizing the value of trinational grasslands management with environmental and economic solutions to sustain the communities of people and species dependent upon them, by Sue Michalsky, Nature Saskatchewan

Ms. Michalsky highlighted that while grasslands are the most threatened ecosystem in North America, the ecosystem services it provides, including carbon sequestration, are vital to the well-being of the entire continent. Ms. Michalsky pointed out that today virtually all grasslands are agricultural landscapes used to produce livestock. Livestock production is compatible with grasslands conservation, she added, noting that many prairie species benefit from some degree of grazing; therefore livestock producers can manage their livestock to enhance ecosystems goods and services. Many native grass ranchers, grass farmers, and hay producers have long been aware of this

unique situation, but the market forces they work within often provide incentives that are at odds with practices that protect and enhance environmental green goods and services. As meat prices decline, conversion of grasslands to other crops and land uses becomes more profitable. Grassland conservation efforts in recent decades have foundered on this obstacle she said. Encouraged by CEC's commitment to grassland conservation, Ms. Michalsky presented Nature Saskatchewan's proposal to work with ranchers and producers stewardship groups, as well as partners in grassland conservation to identify and implement economic mechanisms more favorable for conserving grassland biodiversity, protecting watersheds, and fostering carbon sequestration. Although initial work would focus in Western Canada, Nature Saskatchewan intends to take a staged approach and eventually extend to grassland regions of the United States and Mexico. The CEC Council could contribute to the success of this undertaking in many ways, including the following: 1) empower the three countries' government agricultural agencies to participate in the dialogue and assist in the research to foster biodiversity-friendly forms of grassland agriculture; 2) put in place the economic signals (including incentives and market development) that will encourage the adoption of grassland-friendly agriculture and sustainable practices, amongst the market-based tools are grasslands certification tools for beef and other livestock; and 3) bring grassland into the dialogue about carbon sequestration and climate change adaptation, encouraging more research into grazing practices that store maximum levels of carbon as well as livestock rearing and finishing practices that reduce the total greenhouse emissions footprint of animal products.

The establishment of soil carbon as the universal measure of sustainability, by Erich Knight, Independent Consultant

Thermal conversion of biomass can build back our soil carbon affirmed Mr. Knight. Pyrolysis, gasification and hydro-thermal carbonization are known bio-fuel technologies. The new elements are the concomitant benefits of biochars for soil carbon sequestration, building soil biodiversity and nitrogen efficiency, for the *in situ* remediation of a host of toxic agents and as feed supplement for cutting the carbon footprint of livestock. The energy return on energy investment (EROEI) ranges from 7:1 to 9:1. The general life cycle analysis (LCA) is that every 1 ton of biomass yields 1/3 ton charcoal for soil sequestration which is equal to 1 ton CO₂e plus bio fuels that are equal to 1MWh of exported electricity, so each energy cycle is 1/3 carbon negative, he said. Beyond rectifying the carbon cycle, biochars systems integrate nutrient management. The agricultural soil carbon sequestration standards are the pathway to greenhouse gas management. The goal is getting the entire world to adhere to this, Mr. Knight affirmed. The technologies to harvest carbon, the photo synthetic capture collectors can be found all around us in trees and shrubs. The conversion reactors are the only infrastructure we need to build. He concluded by saying that carbon has high value to recapitalize soils, yielding nutrient dense foods, biofuels paying premiums for pollution abatement, toxic remediation and growing dividends created by an increasing biomass.

Green building as a way to mitigate climate change, by Ariadna Reyes Sanchez, Centro Mario Molina

"The building sector is responsible for 40 percent of energy consumption," said Ariadna Reyes. Different studies assert that green building practices represent a profitable opportunity to abate greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the vulnerability of communities to extreme meteorological phenomena. In this regard, Ariadna Reyes raised the following proposals to design and strengthen measures to mitigate emissions and adapt to climate change in Mexico's building sector: 1) including building life cycle analysis as a design tool; 2) using principles of bioclimatic architecture

and energy efficiency to build green housing developments near the workplace and schools to minimize urban expansion and excessive commutes; and 3) reducing the vulnerability of communities settled on lands sensitive to climate change. She added that it would be advisable for the CEC to foster “regenerative building” actions to make buildings more environmentally friendly, as well as initiatives to create local vulnerability maps to avoid settlements in areas susceptible to extreme meteorological phenomena. She stressed the importance of the building sector’s adoption of a holistic approach to adaptation and mitigation, in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the environmental footprint and vulnerability through green building practices.

The importance of trilateral action to protect pollinators in North America, by Melanie McCavour, Part-time faculty and Doctoral Candidate, Biology, Concordia University, UQAM,

In her address to Council, Ms. McCavour requested that the CEC develop an assessment of our dependence on pollinators, the agricultural production, and the ecological and economic consequences of pollinator decline in North America; issue recommendations for remediation and develop best practices to improve the health, abundance and varieties of native pollinators. Ms. McCavour explained that pollination by insects, birds and bats, is a crucial ecosystem service in agriculture, food and fiber security, environmental sustainability, international trade and conservation. Animal pollination is essential for production of 87 of the world’s major crops, including most fruits and nuts, many vegetables, forage, fiber coffee, cocoa, and tequila. Consumer and farmers alike rely on pollinators. In addition many ecosystems also depend on pollinators to maintain overall biological diversity, she mentioned, adding that unfortunately this crucial ecosystem service is under ever increasing stress. The documented decline in some pollinator species has many possible causes. These threats are a cause concern for agricultural producers and conservationists. In particular, the recent rise in parasites such as Varroa, the sudden appearance of Colony Collapse Disorder, and the increasing enlargement of agricultural fields (reducing the capacity of wild pollinators to contribute to crop reproductive success) and sophistication of broadcast pesticides make the future of this ecosystem service problematic. She stated that collaboration under the NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) could facilitate the maintenance of genetic diversity, integrated pest management and resilience-based management of crop and animal production to reduce this tendency toward a reduction in pollinator services. Ms. McCavour noted that following the 2009 Roundtable on NAFTA, Food Security and Pollination, held at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC, several conclusions and goals were reached, including: 1) the creation of a NAFTA Pollination Task Force; 2) the creation of a Pollinator Task Force within the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) to advise the NAFTA Pollination Task Force; 3) the selection of a representative to attend the CEC (NAFTA Commission on Environmental Cooperation) Council session and other meetings to represent pollination issues; 4) to encourage a representative to participate as a JPAC (Joint Public Advisory Committee of the CEC) member, and 5) overarching considerations that were crafted to be presented to the CEC and the NAFTA Ministers responsible for agriculture and trade.

Reply from the Council members to the oral presenters:

Minister Kent acknowledged the broad spectrum of the presentations and the important concerns and proposals brought to the Council’s attention. Minister Kent recognized their timeliness given the ongoing efforts to implement the new Strategic Plan, and their focus to revitalize the Commission.

Secretary Quesada thanked the public for their interventions, and noted that Semarnat welcomes Mr. Henkel's proposal to work on a "clean industry" initiative under the jurisdiction of Profepa (Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente) and mentioned his intention to present the proposal to his Canadian and American counterparts to assess the merit of including it under CEC's work plan. In response to Guadalupe Hernandez, Secretary Elvira stated that Semarnat has begun working on solid management waste. Through this work, Semarnat is supporting municipalities by financing approximately 200 landfills that comply with the federal norms, to ensure that by 2012 80% of the collected solid waste actually gets to the landfills. He also suggested that Ms. Hernandez provide a more detailed proposal to Semarnat. Regarding Ms. Ariadna Reyes' intervention on green buildings, Secretary Elvira emphasized that the government is reaching its goal of building close to 350,000 new homes with reduced water, gas and energy (gas) consumption; the estimated reduction of CO2 is one ton per home. He added that in Cancun the government recently inaugurated *zero energy* homes, in which the captured solar energy is equivalent to the total amount of energy used in a regular household. In response to Ms. McCavour, Minister Elvira recognized the importance of pollinators for Mexico given its strong reliance on fruits and vegetables exports, adding that the government has been supporting through its Natural Protected Areas numerous projects that involve organic agriculture and expressed support for the idea of creating biological corridors to facilitate the protection of pollinators.

Administrator Lisa P. Jackson expressed a strong personal interest in pollinator services for agriculture, food security, environmental sustainability and international trade and noted that she would ask her staff to look at possible pilot projects that could be undertaken with Canada and Mexico. Addressing Ms. Reyes Sanchez' presentation, Administrator Jackson recognized that the three countries have the same goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the use and construction of green buildings and commended Ms. Reyes' initiative. Administrator Jackson thanked Mr. Knight's presentation on the role of soil carbon and biochar as a measure of sustainability, further noting that the benefits of this type of innovation highlighted during his presentation warrant a serious look on the part of the Council. Administrator Jackson commended Ms. Michalsky's commitment towards the conservation of western grasslands in Saskatchewan, pointing out that the 2011-2012 Operational Plan already includes a grasslands project, and that officials working on this project should review Ms. Michalsky's recommendations. With respect to the presentation on commercializing waste, Administrator Jackson recognized it might be a project worth considering under the greening the economy strategic priority. On the issue of clean technology, Administrator Jackson underlined the Council's commitment to deal with e-waste and promote better practices for manufacturers. In response to Mr. Mayrand of the Suzuki Foundation, Minister Jackson acknowledged that the CEC can be the appropriate forum to share additional information on the green belt concept.

Minister Kent thanked presenters for their interventions. With respect to the presentation on reducing greenhouse gases through green buildings, Minister Kent underlined the importance of regulations for all new constructions within Canada, not only for households but for government buildings as well. The decline of pollinators is an important concern for Canada, he noted. On the issue of grassland conservation, Minister Kent highlighted how the cattle grazing program in the Saskatchewan National Park has resulted in benefits to the ecosystem and looks forward to building on this success. Minister Kent thanked Mr. Mayrand for acknowledging the government decision to

move ahead with the first national park near urban areas which is expected to bring numerous benefits to the communities.

Minister Kent mentioned that the projects presented during this portion of the meeting are examples of projects the Council had in mind when they announced the North American Partnership for Environmental Action (NAPECA) earlier in the day. Minister Kent encouraged the public to visit the CEC website to find out more about NAPECA and how to apply.

Item 10 Signing of Council resolutions and ministerial statement

The chair invited his counterparts to join him in signing Council Resolution 11-03 on establishing funding for the CEC for 2012, as well as the Ministerial Statement.

Minister Kent proceeded to read the ministerial statement:

Eighteenth Regular Session of the CEC Council

Montreal, Canada, 22 June 2011—Today, we, the environment ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States, are proud to present a comprehensive set of initiatives designed to conserve, protect and enhance the North American environment through the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). Working through the unique partnership of the CEC allows us to achieve environmental objectives in a way that none of the three countries could achieve alone.

Our vision for the CEC represents a new path forward for environmental cooperation in North America. It delivers initiatives that bring together partners and connect communities across North America to promote a sense of shared responsibility and stewardship for the environment.

Strategic objectives to meet new priorities

Our cooperative work program for 2011-12 is a coherent plan to address our main priorities—promoting healthy communities and ecosystems; addressing climate change by moving to a low-carbon economy; and working with partners in the private sector to green North America's economy. This allows our government experts to deliver on the strategic objectives that will produce results and direct environmental benefits at the community, indigenous, local and regional levels.

During our meeting today in Montreal we heard from our Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), members of the public, industry and nongovernmental organizations, as well as our officials about some of the work already under way.

We are focusing efforts to establish coherent approaches to manage risks posed by harmful chemicals of mutual concern to our three countries: identifying and tracking them in commerce, monitoring their impact on the environment and human health, and striving to make available the most accurate information possible throughout North America.

We are encouraged by progress on work to improve the information we gather and share among our

countries regarding greenhouse gases. Having comparable information and data is vital to efforts to address climate change.

Changes to our climate will have a direct impact on our shared ecosystems, especially those that are already fragile due to biodiversity and habitat loss, water scarcity or other threats. New work in partnership with local communities that conserves the ecosystems spanning our continent will help protect vital areas such as the grasslands and the transboundary Big Bend-Río Bravo priority conservation area.

Our enforcement officials and other experts continue coordinated efforts to better manage electronic waste, along with other, sometimes illegally traded products, such as restricted ozone-depleting gases and hazardous materials. As we heard from our Joint Public Advisory Committee, their public forum considered a wide range of issues around the growing e-waste challenge facing our countries.

Recognizing the increasing impacts of natural disasters, such as forest fires and flooding, and their relation to adaptation and resilience, we have decided to explore options to strengthen collaboration in this area.

Creating partnerships, empowering communities

Today, we directed \$1.4 million of the CEC budget to fund the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA) to support communities in their efforts to locally address environmental problems across North America. We look forward to enhancing our partnerships and engagement with groups and individuals from our communities in projects that can be models for action throughout the region.

We ask our communities to propose innovative environmental initiatives and direct them to view the Call for Proposals, which is now available on the CEC website (www.cec.org). The proposals will be reviewed this summer and the first round of grants will be announced later this year.

Streamlining our cooperative work

Based on our strategic plan for 2010-15, the Operational Plan for 2011-12 focuses on delivering on our new priorities through good governance, transparency, performance evaluation, and clear goals and objectives. We are confident that this Operational Plan defines initiatives that will achieve clear environmental results that will benefit us all. We have also heard from the CEC Secretariat about ongoing efforts to renew and revitalize its operations in support of these initiatives.

We also demonstrated our commitment to Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) by formally announcing a trilateral review to modernize and improve the submission process. More specifically, this work is expected to culminate, at the 2012 Council Session, in changes to the *Guidelines for Submissions on Enforcement Matters under Articles 14 and 15 of the NAAEC* in order to ensure that submissions are considered efficiently, effectively, and serve the interests of all stakeholders. The SEM process was established seventeen years ago; a comprehensive trilateral review is now timely and appropriate. To this end, our officials will work closely with the Secretariat and carefully consider input from the JPAC and the public.

This past year has allowed us to add significant substance to our vision for a renewed CEC, but more work remains. With important changes and new tools in place to support our communities, the coming years will enable Council to—even further—focus this organization on a set of initiatives that deliver North American solutions to global challenges. We look forward to the 2012 Council Session in the United States to further advance this work.

Item 11 Closing Remarks by Secretary Elvira, and Passing the Torch: New Council Chair and Announcement of 2012 Council Session by Administrator Jackson

Secretary Elvira thanked Minister Kent recognizing his vast political expertise and expressed his outmost satisfaction with the development of the meeting and its outcomes. Secretary Elvira thanked Administrator Jackson for her leadership, Dolores Wesson, the JPAC and the Secretariat for their work and asked his counterparts to consider the possibility of having the CEC participate at the upcoming world conference on climate change in South Africa, bringing innovative perspectives to face the challenges ahead as a region and to provide solutions to the world.

Administrator Jackson thanked her colleagues and the presenters for their interventions; she also thanked the Secretariat staff for their hard work over the past year. She invited the attendees to maintain their commitment to address the current challenges. She concluded by offering compliments to Minister Kent for his hospitality.

Minister Kent thanked attendees for their participation and strongly underlined the value of gatherings like this, which sharpen the focus on shared challenges and highlight the opportunities to work together. Minister Kent recognized that significant progress has been achieved over the past days on important issues, in particular the launching of the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA). He officially transferred the chairmanship to Administrator Jackson and offered full support from Canada to ensure that the work of the CEC remains accountable, relevant and responsive to North America's people and environment. Administrator Jackson, invited by Minister Kent, announced New Orleans as the location of next year's Council session.

Item 12 Concluding Remarks by the Session Chair, Minister Kent

Minister Kent officially adjourned the eighteenth session of the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.