

2024

Report of the Executive Director
to the Council

Equity, Inclusion and Environmental Protection Through North American Cooperation



CEC

#3Countries1Environment



COMMISSION FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
COOPERATION

“The environment knows no borders. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the animals which move freely, all bind us together. But with these shared resources comes a collective responsibility. Only by working together will we solve North America’s most pressing environmental problems in an efficient and cost-effective manner. In this way, we can make the North American region an environmental example for the rest of the world.”

— From the first CEC Council Statement, Oaxaca, Mexico, 13 October 1995





CEC Mission Statement

The CEC facilitates effective cooperation and public participation to conserve, protect and enhance the North American environment in support of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.

Three countries, one environment.

Foreword

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) turned 30 this year and is living testimony to effective environmental protection in the North American region. Created in 1994 to foster coordinated efforts between Canada, Mexico and the United States to protect and conserve our shared environment, the CEC is celebrating three decades of learning, sharing and taking coordinated action to tackle some of our greatest environmental challenges, including humanity's greatest challenge ever, the current triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

At the last North American Leaders' Summit, the Presidents of Mexico and the United States and the Prime Minister of Canada emphasized the region's unique history and culture and redoubled our collective commitments to innovation and sustainable, equitable development, strengthened our bonds of friendship and family, and above all, they underscored our trilateral quest for freedom, justice, human rights, equality and democracy, all central to the DNA of North American society.



As the CEC's 10th Executive Director, and in alignment with the mandate given to me by the Council, I have been entrusted to help the CEC work toward:

- The efficient management of its resources
- Advancing our environmental priorities, through effective, efficient and results-oriented projects
- Increasing the regional and global visibility and unique value of the CEC
- Increasing the CEC's engagement with vulnerable communities, and
- Expanding CEC partnerships that can help advance our trilateral environmental goals

During 2023 we've made significant progress on all of these fronts.

This report focuses specifically on:

- The CEC's 30th anniversary, our accomplishments and goals moving forward
- The Triple Planetary Crisis and the need for urgent North American action
- Building equity and inclusion across the region through trilateral cooperation
- Leveraging Indigenous engagement and promoting the use of Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Strengthening the CEC Secretariat and its team
- Work program highlights since our last Council Session
- Challenges and next steps

The CEC Turns 30!



“The Council today committed itself to several key actions aimed at the protection of migratory species. The first action focuses on migratory birds. The Council also took measures to protect the Monarch butterfly, a species which has become a symbol of the ecological interdependency between the three countries [announcing] the Monarch Butterfly Conservation Program.”

— CEC Council Statement, Toronto, Canada, 2 August 1996





When the NAFTA and NAAEC agreements entered into force on 1 January 1994, it marked the first time that a free trade agreement enshrined obligations to protect the environment, promoting sustainable development, policies for pollution prevention and enhancing compliance with environmental laws and regulations. The NAAEC was a unique and innovative environmental agreement that would shape other international trade agreements and their environmental considerations for years to come.

Regional action on environmental protection was enshrined through the creation of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (the CEC) which would take environmental action with a collaborative approach, providing a forum for discussion, not only between our three countries, but also by working across public agencies and sectors and through engagement with countless organizations, communities and passionate individuals working in harmony as stewards of our environment.

Looking back to 1994 and across the many dozens of initiatives and programs that the CEC has implemented, through trilateral collaboration on shared priorities, the CEC has catalyzed environmental action across North America. Through the CEC, the North American region continues to strengthen our environmental partnerships, building a North American environmental identity centered around our people and our shared environment, and working collaboratively to protect our ecosystems, to build environmental resilience and to advance social equity and environmental justice.

Our Foundational Documents

Federal Register

Vol. 59, No. 54

Monday, March 21, 1994

Presidential Documents

Title 3—

The President

Executive Order 12904 of March 16, 1994

Commission for Environmental Cooperation, Commission for Labor Cooperation, Border Environment Cooperation Commission, and North American Development Bank

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 1 of the International Organizations Immunities Act (22 U.S.C. 288), and having found that the United States participates in the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, the Commission for Labor Cooperation, the Border Environment Cooperation Commission, and the North American Development Bank pursuant to the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act, Public Law 103-182, I hereby designate the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, the Commission for Labor Cooperation, the Border Environment Cooperation Commission, and the North American Development Bank as public international organizations entitled to enjoy the privileges, exemptions, and immunities conferred by the International Organizations Immunities Act. This designation is not intended to abridge in any respect privileges, exemptions, or immunities that such organizations may have acquired or may acquire by international agreements or by congressional action.

William Clinton

THE WHITE HOUSE,
March 16, 1994.

[FR Notice 59 FR 13176]

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DIARIO OFICIAL Martes 21 de diciembre de 1993

PODER EJECUTIVO

SECRETARIA DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES

DECRETO de promulgación de los Acuerdos de Cooperación Ambiental y Laboral de América del Norte

Al margen un sello con el Escudo Nacional que dice Estados Unidos Mexicanos - Presidencia de la República

CARLOS SALINAS DE GORTARI, PRESIDENTE DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS a sus habitantes sabed

Por plenipotenciarios debidamente autorizados al efecto se firmaron simultáneamente el día catorce del mes de septiembre del año de mil novecientos noventa y tres en las ciudades de México, Ottawa y Washington D.C. los Acuerdos de Cooperación Ambiental y Laboral de América del Norte cuyo texto y forma en español constan en la copia certificada adjunta

Los Acuerdos fueron aprobados por la Cámara de Senadores del H. Congreso de la Unión el día veintidós del mes de noviembre del año de mil novecientos noventa y tres según Decreto publicado en el Diario Oficial de la Federación del día ocho del mes de diciembre del propio año

Los Gobiernos de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Canadá y los Estados Unidos de América de conformidad con los Artículos 47 y 51 de los Acuerdos de Cooperación Ambiental y

ACUERDO DE COOPERACIÓN AMBIENTAL DE AMERICA DEL NORTE

ENTRE

EL GOBIERNO DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS, EL GOBIERNO DE CANADA Y EL GOBIERNO DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMERICA

1993

PREAMBULO

El Gobierno de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, el Gobierno de Canadá y el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos de América

CONVENCIDOS de la importancia de conservar, proteger y mejorar el medio ambiente en sus territorios y de que la cooperación en estos terrenos es un elemento esencial para alcanzar el desarrollo sustentable en beneficio de las generaciones presentes y futuras

REAFIRMANDO el derecho soberano de los Estados para aprovechar sus propios recursos según sus propias políticas ambientales y de desarrollo así como su responsabilidad de velar porque las actividades bajo su jurisdicción o control no causen daño al medio ambiente de otros Estados ni a zonas fuera de los límites de jurisdicción nacional

RECONOCIENDO la interrelación de sus

P.C. 1994-1171

CANADA

PRINCE COUNCIL - CONSEIL PRINCE

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IN COUNCIL, on the recommendation of the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to section 7 of the Department of the Environment Act, is pleased hereby to approve the entry by the Minister of the Environment, on behalf of the Government of Canada, into the Canadian Intergovernmental Agreement Regarding the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation with the Government of one or more Provinces of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Newfoundland, and of the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories.

[cabinet confidential]

Approved - Approuvé

[Signature]

17 20 94

Nº: 06300009-202

Some of the CEC’s central accomplishment over three decades

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mapping North America’s Ecoregions• The creation of specialized networks• Meaningful civil society engagement & consultation• Providing environmental grants to communities• Harnessing & disseminating regional environmental data• Generating environmental maps• Sharing best practices on climate mitigation solutions• Promoting energy efficiency & renewable energy• Strengthening climate adaptation and resilience• Creation of a TEK Expert Group• Protecting migratory species• Landmark conservation of the Monarch butterfly• Advancing marine conservation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reducing marine litter• Promoting recycling and sustainable solid waste management• Reducing food loss & waste• Leveraging grasslands protection• Pollutant monitoring and tracking• Building chemical registries• Fostering better handling of hazardous waste• Advancing knowledge and action on DDT• Engaging 1000s of partners• Engaging on Trade and Environment• Special studies green buildings, transportation, maize• Action on lead acid batteries• Promoting Indigenous knowledge• Environmental education• Engaging a diversity of voices | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with local governments• Promoting environmental justice• Fostering meaningful youth engagement• Regionwide forums & consultations• Engaging Indigenous communities• Compliance of environmental laws |
|--|---|---|

The Triple Planetary Crisis and North American Urgent Action

The World Meteorological Organization's *State of Global Climate Report* affirms that the year 2023 was the hottest year on record, *by a clear margin*, surpassing records for ocean temperature, sea-level rise, Antarctic sea ice loss and glacier retreat.

Humanity has never emitted so much greenhouse gas into the atmosphere in one year as we do now. We are now nearly at global average surface warming of 1.45°C above pre-industrial levels, with the warmest ten-year period on record now approaching the 1.5°C threshold of warming beyond pre-industrial times that the Paris Agreement says could cause irreversible ecosystem collapse.

The triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss is humanity's most critical and potentially catastrophic human-induced crisis and is only made more urgent by its dominant paradigm of inequity and inequality.





In this urgent predicament, two convictions must drive all that we do:

- ❶ The recognition that we are not on course and falling short of what is needed, and
- ❷ That we have solutions at our fingertip to slow warming and avoid deeper impacts.

The inter-generational and broad intersectional implications of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss must drive our decisions as what we do today about this crisis will determine the ability of future populations to live and thrive. Each 10th of a degree of avoided warming makes a difference, helping avoid catastrophic and irreversible tipping points that will only bring more biodiversity loss and more suffering to the most environmentally vulnerable communities.

Our Presidents and Prime Minister have recognized the critical need to take rapid and coordinated measures across North America to tackle the climate crisis and respond to its consequences, including achieving aggressive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and working together to keep the 1.5°C threshold warming limit within reach, fostering climate adaptation where impacts are already occurring, protecting our lands and oceans, and building community resilience.

To this end, and through trilateral collaboration at the CEC, North America is working collaboratively to:

- Accelerate climate mitigation actions by advancing best practices to reduce global warming from greenhouse gases, including particularly potent gases such as methane, black carbon, hydrofluorocarbons, and tropospheric ozone, while fostering actions that help increase the resilience of climate-vulnerable communities.
- Reduce pollution across the region by tracking key pollutants in our three countries, while promoting equity and environmental justice.
- Protect and restore biodiversity that contributes to build climate resilience, while promoting nature-based solutions and the incorporation of Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge into environmental protection and climate actions.

Many of the CEC's trilateral initiatives over the past three decades have focused on these targets, however, as our planetary crisis escalates and accelerates, we are taking on additional steps building off our past collaborative environmental initiatives and expanding our actions.



I'd like to share a few highlights that stem from commitments made at recent Council Sessions, including last year's Council meeting in Victoria, British Columbia, where our Council announced several new initiatives that are now getting underway at the CEC. I'd also like to highlight the expansion of existing projects that also build on our historic work including:

- We are now launching *Horizon 2030 Initiative*, which is a North American environmental taking stock to help the region develop strategic priorities for short-term environmental and climate action.
- Another recent initiative is focused on *Fast Mitigation Strategies to Reduce Short-lived Climate Pollutants*. This new CEC project, now in its final design stage and approaching launch, will provide a platform for our three countries to tackle one of the most aggressive climate pollutants, methane, which is 86 times more potent as a climate forcer than CO₂. The project will focus on methane emission measurements and modeling in the waste sector across our three countries, harnessing emerging remote sensing technology to identify key methane emission sources.
- We are expanding CEC efforts to reduce food loss and waste (which is also a critical source of methane emissions from organic waste going to landfills).
- We are engaging with sub-national governments to implement climate action, particularly in cities across North America, in our new *Champion Cities Initiative Promoting Indigenous and Urban Solutions to Climate Adaptation*.
- A newly launched initiative for *Transitioning Remote Communities to Renewable Energy* is in its initial stages of implementation.
- Currently launching is our *Air Quality Improvement for Environmental Justice* project, which is focusing on monitoring and reducing black carbon emissions from agricultural and domestic burning, fossil fuel combustion, and transportation. This project critically tackles public health and climate efforts.
- We are cooperating on the conservation of over 1700 North American marine protected areas through the longstanding North American *Marine Protected Areas Network (NAMPAN)*.

“We reiterate our commitment to clean and sustainable growth, and support strong and effective actions to address climate change. The trilateral Partnership Statement included commitments on the early ratification of the Paris Agreement, including robust implementation of its transparency provisions, a landmark clean energy goal for North America, and the development of both mid-century and long term low-greenhouse gas emissions strategies.”

— CEC Council Statement, Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, 9 September 2016





Building Equity and Inclusion Across the Region

As the CEC works across our three countries to design initiatives that will take action to tackle our most pressing environmental and climate challenges, we are acutely aware of addressing the inequitable impacts of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss suffered by already disadvantaged and historically marginalized communities.

At the most recent North American Leaders' Summit, our leaders made strong commitments to collaborate through regional and multilateral organizations like the CEC, to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, providing marginal communities meaningful participation, protecting civil rights and racial justice, promoting gender equality and empowerment, and supporting the inclusion of women and girls.

Through the CEC's growing actions to promote environmental justice, we're advancing all of these priorities. With the CEC's Environmental Justice for Climate (EJ4Climate) grant program now in its third cycle, projects such as the *Air Quality Improvement for Environmental Justice* initiative getting underway, and the ongoing activities of the recently created Communities for Environmental Justice Network (CEJN), the CEC is continuously exploring ways to promote regional environmental justice (EJ) action, learning from each other's past and emerging best practices for fostering environmental equity and non-discrimination.

In 2023 we took steps to strengthen our work on EJ at the regional level, taking a deeper dive into EJ dynamics and issues across North America, helping our countries better understand EJ in all its dimensions, and how it continues to evolve across cultures, social movements, communities and the policies of our three countries. Through our engagement with EJ partners, community leaders, academics and public officials leading EJ policy across the region, we are generating and contributing EJ guidance so that communities can better and more equitably enjoy a healthy environment. At the CEC, we are sharing regional knowledge on how promoting healthy natural environments can serve to increase community resilience against the impacts of pollution and climate change while promoting equity and the inclusion of historically marginalized groups. The CEC is showing how we can introduce environmental solutions and promote environmental protection and restoration that can also help reverse entrenched historical inequities in terms of how some people benefit from the environment or inequitably suffer from its degradation.

“Our countries share a common vision for a prosperous and sustainable economy that will help protect the environment and health of communities across North America, particularly underserved and vulnerable communities, ... including those that are more vulnerable to disproportionate climate impacts.”

— CEC Council Statement, Virtual Meeting due to COVID-19, 10 September 2021



CEC's EJ Deep Dive

Understanding the complexities of historical, persistent or emerging environmental inequities is a critical first step to making our communities more sustainable and more equitable. In this rapidly changing climate, as environmental impacts deepen, future generations depend on us to make the right choices today. We must challenge ourselves to recognize environmental inequities and systemic vulnerabilities, as well as how those vulnerabilities intersect with historical exclusion and discrimination. And we must recognize that all that we are doing is not yet enough; *we can* and *must* do more to protect our environment while reversing these inequities.

To this end, and over the course of this past year, the CEC took on the challenge of exploring EJ across North America in all of its dimensions, from its origins in civil rights advocacy to reverse historic, systemic, inequitable and segregated pollution, to the evolution of procedural tools such as access to environmental information, public participation and engagement and access to justice, which are fundamental to achieve higher degrees of environmental justice.





Discussion Paper

Environmental Justice for 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities:

Dimensions on Queering Environmental Policy in North America



By Leo Goldsmith, Diego de León, and Emiliano Reyes Galindo
June 2024

EJ Intersectionality

With the deepening impacts of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, now more than ever we must work consciously and diligently to identify and act to address the most acute environmental impacts faced by the most vulnerable sectors, designing more appropriate actions and taking more effective measures to address and revert inequity. To do this we must embrace environmental justice in all of its dimensions, understanding, recognizing and being sensitive to historical and systemic patterns of marginalization and discrimination, recognizing that multiple layers of vulnerability have a bearing on who benefits from the environment and who suffers an unequal burden from its demise.

Building on the foundations of a North American-born EJ movement and considering the different ways EJ has been addressed across our countries, the CEC is expanding its EJ focus to consider intersectional layers of vulnerability in the face of environmental challenges. From exploring emerging issues such as 2SLGBTQIA+ dimensions of climate vulnerability, to working with youth leadership and advisory groups across our three countries, and taking into account Indigenous dimensions of the EJ movement, we are learning from the diverse experiences and through our outreach and engagement, and are building our EJ work in collaboration with key actors across North America.

“The environment ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States today directed the CEC to develop an action plan to reduce the presence in the environment of the highly toxic substances dioxins and furans, and hexachlorobenzene, to further protect human health [and] gave the CEC the green light to launch the North American Bird Conservation Initiative.”

— CEC Council Statement, Banff, Alberta, 28 June 1999



The Communities for Environmental Justice Network (CEJN)



Source: CEJN first trilateral workshop, 14-16 November 2023.

In early 2023 the CEC launched an initiative to create and foster North American collaboration to bring together local environmental leaders to exchange knowledge on environmental justice, facilitate learning and develop a virtual resource library, with the goal of increasing capacity by amplifying and disseminating community-based expertise and lessons learned regarding climate adaptation.

“The CEC will continue to provide an important service by identifying emerging threats to the shared environment, thus allowing governments to anticipate these problems and prevent them before they happen.”

— CEC Council Statement, Mérida, Mexico, 26 June 1998





Chief Walas Namugwis, David Mungo Knox, Kwakiutl Dancer and singer,
Traditional Ceremony, 30th annual Council Session and Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC)
Public Forum, 28 and 29 June 2023, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Indigenous Engagement and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

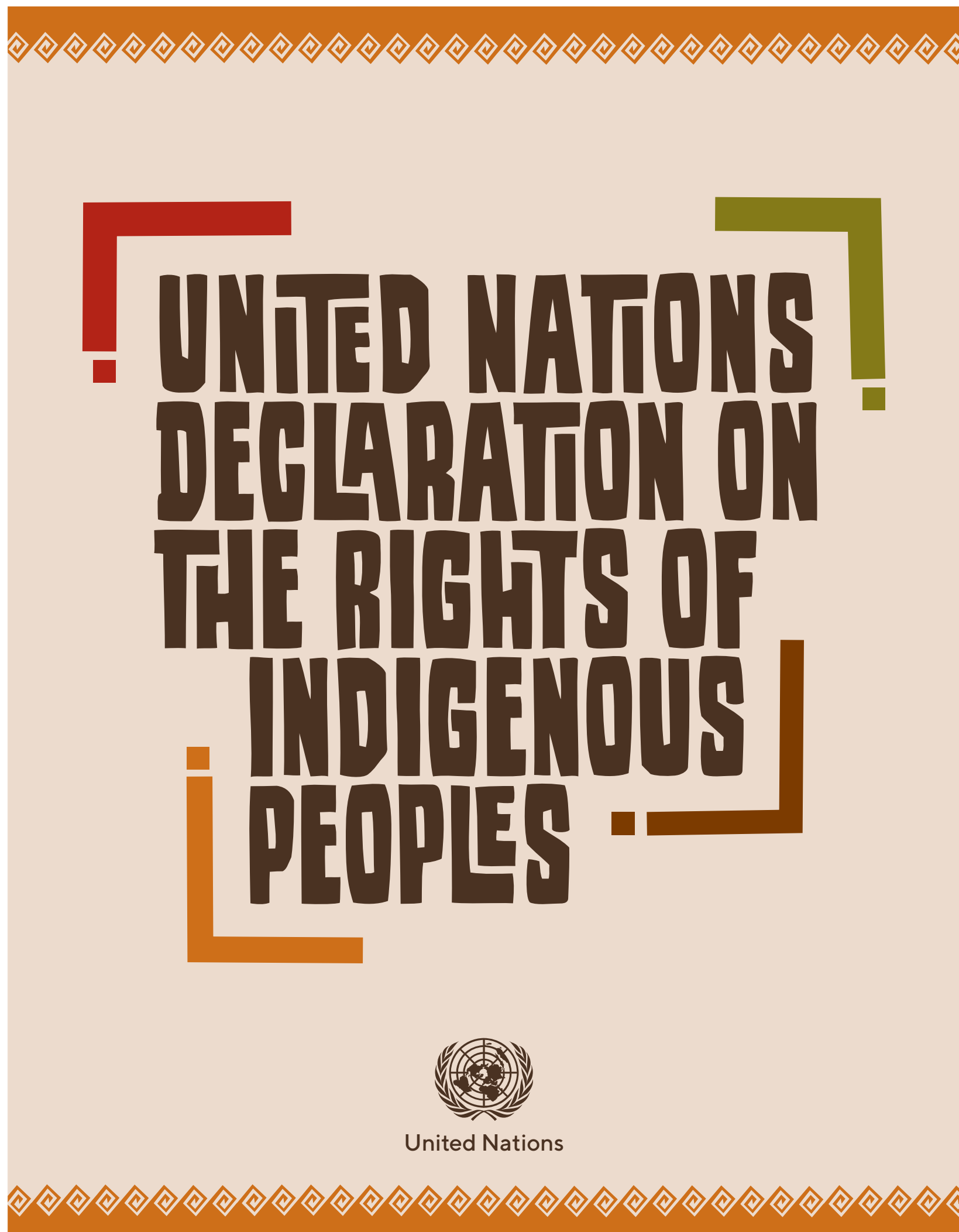
The CEC's Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG) has underscored the importance for the CEC to amplify Indigenous voices and respect Indigenous rights at the CEC, and we are doing just that.

A significant portion of the CEC's work engages Indigenous nations, tribes and communities and promotes regional learning from Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). With the advice and guidance of our TEKEG members from our three countries, the CEC fosters collaborative initiatives with Indigenous communities across North America.

In 2023, the CEC hosted a trinational *Indigenous-led* forum, titled, *Indigenous Approaches to Freshwater Management in North America*, in Oaxaca, Mexico. Entirely designed and carried out by Indigenous peoples, including the TEKEG, the gathering was held alongside the CEC's Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) joint public forum. This format served to amplify the voices of Indigenous peoples and offered direct channels to engage with government representatives and other community leaders.

In response to our Indigenous partners and Indigenous communities that engage with CEC projects and initiatives, the CEC is assisting our TEKEG experts to advance discussions toward the development of North American TEK Principles. To this end, the CEC hosted a TEKEG-led Roundtable on TEK Principles, bringing together esteemed experts on TEK and Indigenous policy from our countries to discuss the feasibility, challenges and opportunities of the developing North American TEK Principles.





We are also actively engaged in:

- Expanding Indigenous-related resources offered on the CEC website
- Conducting training to enhance CEC cultural competency on Indigenous considerations
- Promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer and the unique role and knowledge of Indigenous women within CEC projects, and
- Revitalizing networks, collaboration and partnerships between Indigenous Peoples across national boundaries

Canada, Mexico and the United States have all expressed support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The CEC is exploring ways that through its work it can respond to the advice, direction, priorities and expectations set out by Indigenous peoples to respect Indigenous rights, including the right to self-determination, knowledge and legal systems, and ensuring that Indigenous perspectives and TEK are applied, protected and included in all that we do.

“We recognize the importance of preserving the traditional knowledge and practices of local and Indigenous communities that contribute to addressing the effects of climate change, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and biological diversity.”

— CEC Council Statement, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada, 17 July 2014



Strengthening the CEC

The CEC Secretariat team

The CEC continues to shine with a highly skilled and age, gender and culturally diverse professional team, and continuously strives for increasing transparency and accountability, promoting sound financial management and using technology in innovative ways, while fostering a healthy, respectful, and productive environment.



Of noteworthy mention, during 2023 we:

- Recruited high caliber seasoned professionals, including:
 - A new Director of Administration,
 - A Meeting Services Assistant,
 - A new IT Technician,
 - Three new Leads for Communications, Advisory Groups and Outreach and Partnerships,
 - Our new Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge Officer.
- Expanded internships and fellowships on a variety of topics, including Environmental Justice, Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Environmental Law Enforcement and Institutional Sustainability.
- Continued to integrate youth and diverse team members to the CEC family.

Policies, Protocols and Procedures

For the CEC to deliver on its priorities, it must also align its operations in order to support the work programs and promote workplace values, while striving to maximize efficiencies and promote sustainability. Some notable achievements related to administrative management, which furthered our ongoing efforts to improve management and performance, in 2023 we:

- Updated the CEC’s Procurement Manual to streamline processes and expedite contracting.
- Trained our team on Indigenous engagement and history.
- Administered an Employee Pulse Survey targeted to employees’ development needs.
- Develop targeted managerial training for staff and executive management.
- Drafted a Defenders Protocol for all CEC operations and activities across the region.
- Conducted a review of our administrative human resources operations.
- Finalized our GEDI rollout plan to be implemented in 2024.
- Upgraded our server operating systems and software.
- Increased the resilience of key IT systems (by moving to a cloud delivered solutions).
- Provided training to staff on processes and efficiency of meeting planning.
- Developed an Office Sustainability Policy and Strategy to reduce CEC’s environmental footprint.
- Conducted thematic learning sessions on Environmental Justice and Plastics.

“The Council, recognizing that there is abundant scientific evidence that children are particularly vulnerable to many environmental hazards in the air they breathe, the water they drink, the food they eat and the environment in which they live, learn, and play ... commits to working together as partners to develop a cooperative agenda to protect children from environmental threats with the overall objective of reducing human-made pressures on children’s health; [and] directs the CEC to develop an agenda on children’s health and the environment in North America by: developing inventories of national, bilateral, and trilateral activities related to children’s environmental health. ... applying the perspective of children’s health and the environment to key work areas of the CEC ... initiating activities to increase parents’ and the public’s awareness and education about environmental threats to children’s health and ways of preventing exposure to these threats.”

— CEC Council Resolution 00-01, 13 June 2000





Team Learning

During 2023, the CEC launched a training and capacity building series of informal talks concerning issues of importance to the CEC and to the North American environmental agenda. These are opportunities to share and exchange knowledge amongst our team, with external experts and with the broader CEC family (JPAC, TEKEG, and the Parties). This year featured a diverse list of knowledge sharing topics on:

- Grasslands Conservation and Migratory Birds
- The role of methane and other short-lived climate pollutants in tackling the climate crisis
- Marine Litter
- Environmental Justice: Origins, Evolution, and Emerging Policy in North America
- Unleashing the power of AI for human rights and environmental preservation
- Environmental Law Enforcement in North America: Citizen Participation and the SEM Process
- CEC's Sustainability Strategy
- Youth Engagement

Visibility, Partnerships and International Engagement

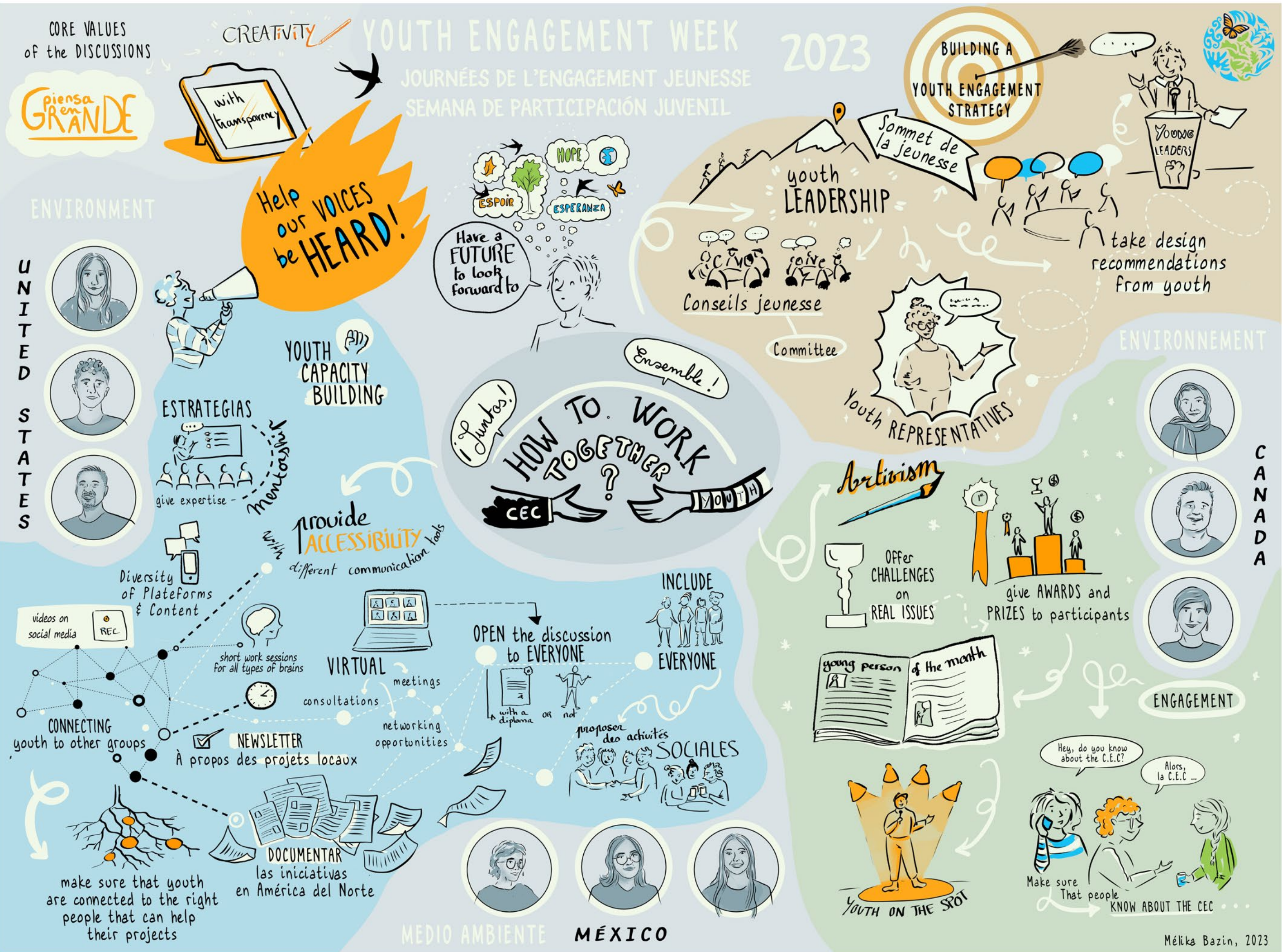


Image: artistic depiction of CEC's 2024 youth engagement week.

Ensuring that the CEC's work aligns with regional priorities set by our Presidents and Prime Minister during 2023, the CEC engaged in a number of regional and international arenas and forums that contributed to the CEC's regional and international visibility, as well as sharing CEC knowhow and regional experiences with other regions. These included:

- At COP28 in Dubai, where the CEC participated in a number of panels, including on renewable energy promotion through our IRENA project, on waste and circular economy, on youth engagement and 2SLGBTQIA+ dimensions of climate change, as well as at two high-level plenaries that communicated to the Conference of Parties the CEC's actions, role and support by our Parties in the North American region, to key global climate objectives.
- At the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) ministerial meeting, where the CEC is helping share and advance strategies to reduce short-lived climate pollutant emissions, such as methane and black carbon.
- By exploring collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) for potential areas to share the CEC's regional experience with other regions and actors at a global scale to promote biodiversity conservation and our countries' commitments to protect 30% of lands and oceans by 2030.

- Strengthening our partnership with the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) North America Office, including engagement in UNEP's North America Strategic Foresight strategy exercise.
- Collaborating with other regional trade agreement submissions on enforcement forums to share the experiences of the CEC's SEM process and other actions to promote the enforcement of environmental laws.
- Continued collaboration with our various USMCA/CUSMA associated bodies, such as the USMCA/CUSMA's Deputies Meeting, which took place during 2023.
- Hosting the CEC's inaugural *Youth Engagement Week* at CEC headquarters, bringing youth from the three countries to work alongside our teams and provide their recommendations on fostering meaningful youth engagement.
- Launching the CEC's new Generation of Environmental Leaders Program (GELP), fostering youth environmental leadership across North America.

“This Council Session marks the 15th anniversary of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. We have taken note of the progress we have made in the maturity and extent of our environmental cooperation, in promoting sustainable development in the region, in strengthening environmental enforcement, in addressing the linkages between trade and environment, and in promoting public participation in regional environmental matters. We look forward to continued progress in these areas.”

— CEC Council Statement, Denver, Colorado, 24 June 2009



Work Program Highlights since our last Council Session

The CEC's Annual Report details more fully with the many activities, programs and initiatives in which the CEC has been engaged under our Operational Plan, so I will not go into too much detail in this *Executive Director's Report* regarding our rich agenda, but I would like to highlight a few of the key programmatic and initiative activities and achievements from 2023 that are examples of our work to promote regional environmental conservation and more effectively tackle the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

“The Council announced that the first annual North American Pollutant Release Inventory (NAPRI) will be published in 1997, as part of an effort to provide the public with information on pollutant sources and risks [helping] improve the quality of the environment.”

— CEC Council Statement, Toronto, Canada, 2 August 1996





Environmental Quality

Our *Air Quality Improvement for Environmental Justice* (AQ for EJ) initiative has created partnerships with three community-based organizations in Canada, Mexico and the US, to establish community-led monitoring of ambient black carbon concentrations, which have detrimental impacts on human health and the environment. In a parallel project to reduce methane and other Short-Lived Climate Pollutants in the waste sector, an implementing framework has been established and is bringing together experts on advanced methane detection technologies, including satellites and other remote sensing methods, continuous emissions monitoring, and other tools to improve methane measurement methods and emissions controls across our countries. The project will involve exploring approaches to using remote sensing data to enhance compatibility with existing, on-the-ground emissions estimates.

“Our efforts have led to the elimination of significant reduction of the production and use in North America of DDT, chlordane, PCBs, mercury and, most recently, lindane. Today we set a new course towards the sound management of a greater number of toxic chemicals and the sectors producing them in North America.”

— CEC Council Statement, Ottawa, Canada, 26 June 2008



Green Growth

The CEC project, “Strengthening the Implementation and Effective Enforcement of CITES for Timber in North America,” has successfully built capacity of our countries to address illegal timber trade in the region, including activities to foster knowledge exchange, capacity building, and collaborative efforts among government officials and experts across North America. Through this project, the CEC has helped enhance the understanding and implementation of CITES regulations, improved the ability of public environmental law enforcement officials to identify and intercept suspicious timber shipments, established a trilateral alliance of laboratories for wood product identification, and developed guidelines for implementing the newly introduced CITES source code.

Source: Training during the in-person meeting of the trilateral alliance of laboratories for wood identification. August 2023.



“Our vision of the CEC is of an organization that is a catalyst for action by the Parties and others to ensure our air is cleaner, our water purer, and our plant and animal species better conserved and protected, as our countries’ economic relationship grows. We also see [the CEC] as a forum through which we can discuss and facilitate regional action on our common global commitments.”

— CEC Council Statement, Puebla, Mexico, 23 June 2004
on occasion of the CEC’s 10 Year Anniversary



Ecosystems

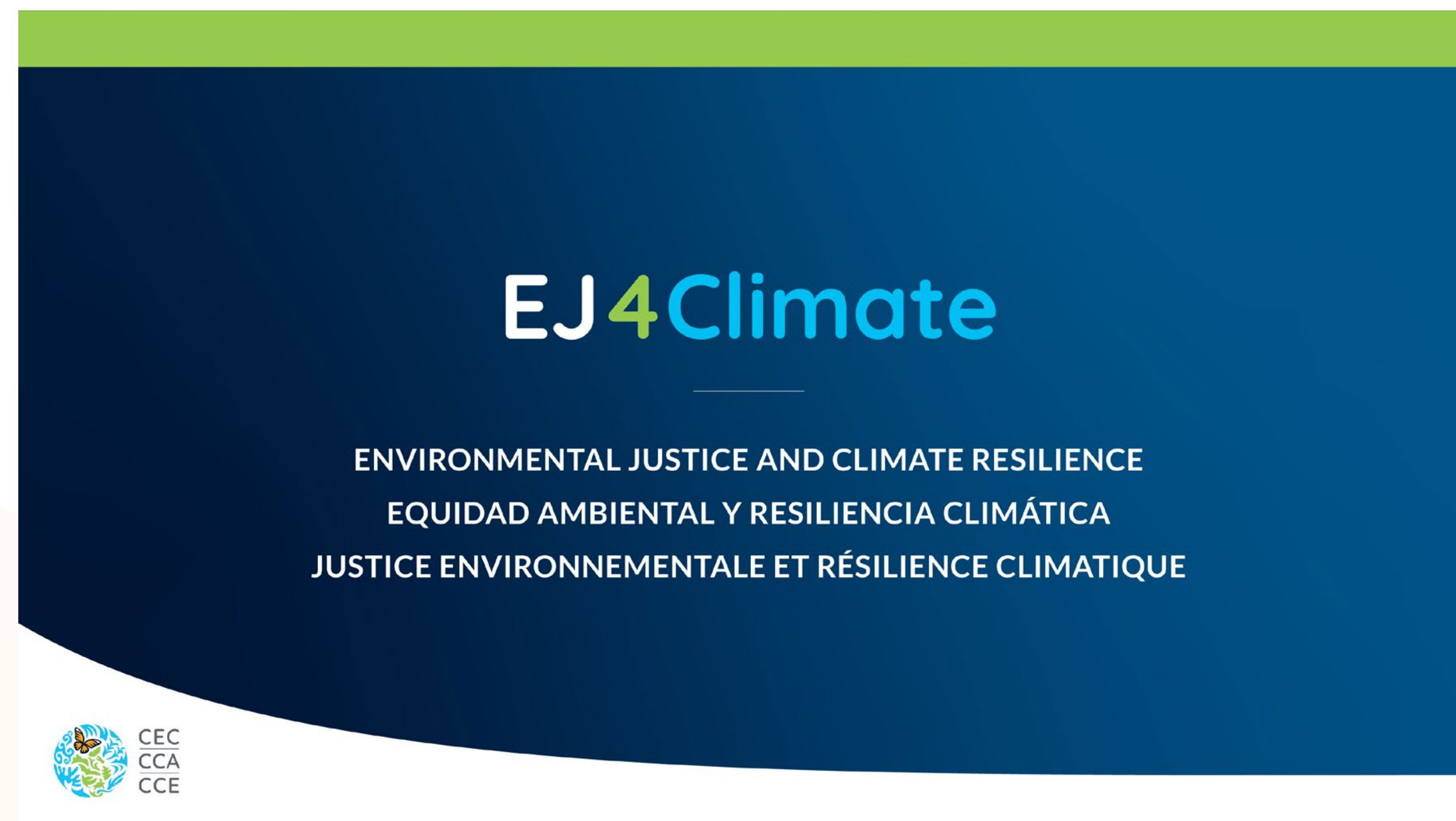
In 2023, the CEC launched *People for Pollinators*, an online campaign highlighting the crucial role that pollinators play in our wellbeing, encouraging North Americans to play their part in helping pollinators thrive. The campaign has been shared widely across North America and worldwide since its launch (in late 2023) and will be active to the end of this year (2024).



“The management of freshwater is an issue of global concern. In 2001 we asked the CEC to examine possible areas of collaboration among the three countries where the CEC could add value [and] facilitate the sharing of case studies that demonstrate national and local experiences and best practices on water quality.”

— CEC Council Statement, Washington, DC, 25 June 2003





CEC Grants Programs

In September 2023, the third grant cycle of *EJ4Climate* was launched, calling for projects that will advance community empowerment strategies in support of environmental justice and community resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events in urban areas. In North America, approximately 80% of people live in urban areas, making urban environments the space and framework where much of today's climate change, and our responses to it, unfolds and results in significant impacts. In total, 13 communities across the three countries will receive C\$2,395,618 in grant support.



CEC Grants Programs

In November 2023, the CEC launched a new cycle of the *North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA)* grant program, to support environmental initiatives that involve and empower Indigenous Peoples and communities and enhance climate adaptation by respectfully applying and protecting Indigenous knowledge systems. This is in line with the importance the CEC places on working with Indigenous Peoples and communities—the original guardians and caretakers of territories in Canada, Mexico and the United States and whose environmental knowledge and practices, and unique perspectives are increasingly recognized, both at local and international levels, in many places today. In total, nine communities (three per country) will benefit from approximately C\$1,500,000 in grant support.

“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 effort 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.”

— CEC Council Statement, Montréal, Canada, 22 June 2011



SEM

The CEC continued its mission to promote public participation and transparency in the effective enforcement of environmental laws through the implementation of the Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) Process. In 2023 the CEC developed the first factual record under the USMCA/CUSMA Chapter 24 involving the Loggerhead Turtle in Baja California Sur, Mexico. The Secretariat also received instructions from the Council to proceed with the development of a factual record concerning hydraulic fracturing in Mexico. During 2023, the CEC received seven new submissions, marking a 20-year record for the mechanism and also processed the highest number of active submissions since 1997 (12).



“We are committed to ensuring that the Submission on Enforcement Matters (SEM) process continues to be an efficient and valuable public participation mechanism, promoting the effective enforcement of environmental law in our three countries. ... Today we are pleased to announce ... a new online portal, designed to provide members of the public with a user-friendly resource for filing submissions ... and ... a SEM tracker that will allow interested parties to easily monitor compliance with the mandatory and target SEM process deadlines set forth in the Agreement and SEM Guidelines.”

— CEC Council Statement, Los Cabos, Mexico, 11 July 2013



Challenges and Next Steps

Thirty years of successful cooperation and collaboration to protect and conserve our shared North American environment has forged a strong regional union, key partnerships and a healthy environmental identity that better position North America to successfully tackle our most pressing environmental challenges. Through our collective action we can increase our environmental resilience, improve regional well-being and offer an example for positive and sustainable planetary transformation.

The CEC embodies a unique collaborative spirit and will continue to work tirelessly to advance environmental sustainability for present and for future generations. The quest for equity, inclusion and non-discrimination is engrained in our DNA and is already a central goal to all that we do.

In 2024 we will see new action by our three countries and at the CEC to tackle the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, and as we take each action, as we advance each of our programs and initiatives, and as we work with our many partners across North America to advance sustainability, our commitments to advancing environmental justice will be a front and center priority. With a new environmental justice officer joining our staff this year, with new and expanded EJ-focused projects and initiatives, and with EJ streamlined into all of our operations, the CEC will be working to advance equity and inclusion across the region.

Through our trilateral initiatives and CEC action, we assist our countries in working to meet our environmental challenges and rapidly reach our environmental and climate targets. The science is clear. The time to act is now. The CEC is uniquely poised to set a regional and global example of effective actions to tackle our climate emergency and promote social equity and inclusion. We must choose carefully and wisely, balancing our efforts to mitigate climate change, while ensuring sustainable and equitable adaptation. The actions we choose today will directly impact the most climate-vulnerable communities and lock in the fate of future generations.

While time is short and the challenges are tall, I am confident that—grounded on three decades of successful collaboration—the next three decades will bring the transformational change we need in order to meet our environmental goals and forge a sustainable, equitable future.

Jorge Daniel Taillant

Executive Director

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation

“We affirm the urgent need to tackle the devastating effects that climate change poses to the well-being of our communities. ... We underline the importance of promoting collective action to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, ... to ensure clean air, land, and water for present and future generations. ... The path to a healthier environment and meaningful progress toward sustainable development in our region depends on our collective determination to succeed.”

— CEC Council Statement, Victoria, British Columbia, 29 June 2023





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