

**JPAC Public Forum on Reaching Horizon 2030:  
An Environmental Outlook for North American Cooperation  
4–5 December 2024, Mexico City, Mexico**

**Summary Record**

**ITEM 1: JPAC Public Forum Traditional Indigenous Welcoming Ceremony**

A welcoming ceremony was led by Amelia Reyna Monteros Guijón, an Indigenous representative from the Nahuas Nation and member of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG) at the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), to mark the beginning of the event. She expressed her gratitude to all those in attendance and acknowledged their ancestors for allowing them to gather in that sacred space. Monteros Guijón began by asking permission from the guardians of this place, Mexico, to carry out that day's work. She then proceeded to honor the four cardinal directions and the elements that sustain life on Earth. Monteros Guijón lamented that an anthropocentric approach to the world has led to an environmental crisis and called for an ecocentric approach, reminding everyone that as guardians of the Earth, they must continue to protect it for future generations. In her words, Monteros Guijón reminded the gathering that the wisdom of the ancestors and the elements are not only a guide for the present but a call to action to ensure the well-being of the planet and all its inhabitants.

**ITEM 2: Welcoming Remarks by Esteban Escamilla, JPAC Chair**

Welcoming remarks were delivered by Esteban Escamilla, 2024 Chair of the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), who greeted participants and emphasized the focus on Horizon 2030. The initiative's objective is to develop strategic recommendations for the CEC Council on how North America can achieve its climate goals. The focus is on three priority areas: Earth observation (EO) technologies and other geographic information system (GIS) tools, sustainable transportation and ecosystem services, and the sustainable management of biodiversity. Additionally, four transversal themes are critical to the initiative's achievement: traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous perspectives, environmental justice, subnational governance, and private-sector participation, along with corporate social responsibility. He concluded by inviting members of JPAC and the TEKEG to introduce themselves.

**ITEM 3: Opening Remarks by Jorge Daniel Taillant, Executive Director of the CEC**

Jorge Daniel Taillant, Executive Director of the CEC, opened the meeting by outlining its two main objectives: the urgency of addressing the triple planetary crisis, and defining how the United States/Mexico/Canada Agreement (USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC), and in particular the CEC, can contribute to solutions. He emphasized the simultaneity and interrelatedness of the planetary crises—the escalating climate crisis driving global warming; the widespread pollution of water, air, and land; and the rapid loss of biodiversity, which threatens ecosystem collapse. He then discussed the socioeconomic crisis of inequities and injustice, where benefits and burdens are not shared equally. According to him, these multiple crises highlight the failure of the system to address basic well-being for everyone.

The Executive Director stressed the urgency of addressing these issues, focusing on Horizon 2030, and highlighted the importance of regional collaboration in North America, citing USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC as a key driver of environmental policy improvements and cooperation. He closed his remarks with a reflection on the need to rethink humanity's relationship with nature, echoing the words of Alicia Bárcena, Secretary of the Environment in Mexico, about the failures of the extractivist system and the inequities it causes.

#### **ITEM 4: Expert Panel and Roundtable Discussions on Earth Observation Technologies and Other GIS Tools**

**Setting the Stage: Orlando Cabrera**, Head of Unit, Environmental Quality, CEC

##### **Invited Speakers:**

- **Steve De Roy**, Chief Executive Officer, The Firelight Group, Canada
- **Blanca Estela Sánchez Reyes**, President, *Mbis Bin* Semilla para la Siembra (Seeds for Sowing), Mexico
- **Judy Lai-Norling**, Chief Operating Officer, Carbon Mapper, United States

Orlando Cabrera, Head of the Environmental Quality Unit at the CEC, introduced the first session, on Earth observation (EO) technologies and GIS tools, by providing a brief overview of the way in which EO and GIS technologies can support and inform decision-making for climate mitigation and adaptation. He explained that these technologies, combined with human observation and artificial intelligence (AI), provide continuous spatial coverage, enabling monitoring of climate pollutants like methane, tracking climate-related events (droughts, floods, forest fires), and visualizing the impacts of climate change. He emphasized the importance of regional collaboration, as North America shares a common environment and climate impacts. Cabrera concluded by presenting the CEC's work on EO and GIS tools. Looking ahead, he posed questions about improving the accessibility of these technologies, integrating Indigenous knowledge, and leveraging EO/GIS to support climate mitigation efforts in the region.

After this, Julian Portilla, forum facilitator, introduced Steve DeRoy, Chief Executive Officer of the Firelight Group, and invited him to the podium to deliver his presentation. DeRoy began by talking about the critical role of mapping in understanding Indigenous knowledge, and community land use. He highlighted how Indigenous mapping consulting services are centered around the needs and priorities of Indigenous Nations and based on key data principles like free, prior, and informed consent—ensuring participants are fully informed and their consent is voluntary—and the concepts of ownership, control, access, and possession, along with data governance and sovereignty, to ensure that data is classified and managed according to the vision and responsibilities set by the Nations. He concluded by mentioning The Indigenous Mapping Collective, a global network of Indigenous mappers. Through this collective, Indigenous communities lead data collection efforts, using both open-source and proprietary software to protect their homelands, increase spatial literacy, and share their stories with the world.

Blanca Estela Sánchez Reyes, President of *Mbis Bin* Semilla para la Siembra (Seeds for Sowing), took the floor next and explained how EO technologies are used in the Copalita-Zimatán-Huatulco Basin through a community management approach focused on Oaxaca's life sources. Her work started when she participated in a project implemented by WWF Mexico and *Fundación Gonzalo Río Arronte IAP* which involved local children in conservation activities, training them as "community promoters" to co-create solutions. After the project, Sánchez Reyes and other community promoters started to work on key problems identified in the basin, such as illegal logging, land-use changes, soil erosion, pollution, and poor water management. Solutions included monitoring reforestation progress through GIS and applying agroecological practices for chemical-free food production. Challenges included limited access to technology, capacity building, and financial resources. To conclude her intervention, Sánchez Reyes emphasized that the project's success lies in strengthening social community initiatives and fostering collaboration and network-building within Indigenous communities.

The final presentation was given by Judy Lai-Norling, Chief Operating Officer of Carbon Mapper, who began by introducing Carbon Mapper, a public-private partnership that uses advanced satellite

technology to monitor and quantify methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. Through its collaboration with the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Carbon Mapper aims to track 90% of point-source emissions, providing a comprehensive view of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. These data help track emissions in critical regions and provide insights into areas where mitigation can be most effective. The data gathered by Carbon Mapper serve multiple stakeholders. Sector-specific tools, like the Global Energy Monitor and WasteMAP, use the data to track emissions in energy and waste sectors. Additionally, local communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) leverage these data to advocate for policies addressing the public health impacts of air pollution and harmful pollutants like benzene. Carbon Mapper also contributes to global initiatives, such as the UN's Lowering Organic Waste Initiative (LOW-Methane). By making these data publicly available on its website, Carbon Mapper promotes transparency, collaboration, and informed decision-making, to address climate change on a global scale.

The session concluded with questions from the public and was followed by in-person and online roundtable discussions in which participants answered questions regarding the most urgent topics to address, opportunities for regional collaboration, the way to integrate TEK, and the way to create solutions for all and examples to learn from.

#### **ITEM 5: Expert Panel and Roundtable Discussions on Sustainable Transportation**

**Setting the Stage: Armando Yáñez Sandoval**, Head of Unit, Green Growth, CEC

##### **Invited Speakers:**

- **Apooyak'ii / Dr. Tiffany Hind Bull–Prete**, Tier II Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Resiliency, and Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Lethbridge, Canada
- **Andrés Rojo Maurer**, Consultant in Mobility and Public Transportation in Mexico, German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), Mexico
- **Tim Dallmann**, Director, International Partnerships Program, International Council on Clean Transportation, United States

Armando Yáñez Sandoval, Head of the Green Growth Unit at the CEC, introduced the second session of the day, titled "Sustainable Transportation for Pollution Reduction." He began by explaining how a regional approach to sustainable transportation is crucial due to its significant environmental impact, as transportation is the second-largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally, accounting for 16% of emissions in 2023. In North America, the transportation sector's share is even higher, with Mexico contributing 34%, the US 33%, and Canada 22%. This shared challenge, which includes air pollution and climate change, crosses national borders and requires coordinated action. He emphasized that the goal is to develop regional strategies that support national efforts to decarbonize transportation and reduce GHG emissions within the next five years. Yáñez Sandoval concluded by highlighting that the CEC has supported these efforts through various initiatives and reports. Looking ahead, key questions remain regarding how to collaborate on cleaner transportation, reduce emissions, and ensure the transition is inclusive, benefiting all communities and supporting economic prosperity.

After this, Julian Portilla, forum facilitator, gave the floor to the panelists. The second session began with an online presentation delivered by Apooyak'ii / Dr. Tiffany Hind Bull–Prete, Tier II Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Resiliency, and Assistant Professor of Sociology for the University of Lethbridge, who addressed the urgent need to tackle limited mobility in rural and remote areas, highlighting its profound impact on the safety of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit individuals. She stressed the importance of improving transportation infrastructure and addressing systemic barriers to ensuring access to essential

services, education, and economic opportunities. Dr. Hind Bull also pointed out that limited access to transportation can expose individuals to greater danger of violence and exploitation. Additionally, she advocated for sustainable and just transportation systems that prioritize reducing emissions and improve mobility while benefiting both the land and its people. Finally, Dr. Hind Bull also called for transboundary collaboration between Canada, Mexico, and the US, recommending the establishment of a trilateral mobility council that would invite Indigenous governments to be part of the decision-making process.

Next, Andrés Rojo Maurer, Consultant in Mobility and Public Transportation in Mexico for the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), began his presentation by highlighting the transportation sector's significant contribution to greenhouse gases and the rapid growth of private vehicles, which increases traffic costs such as time, money, and health. Urban sprawl also outpaces population growth, leading to mobility challenges and the loss of green spaces. Rojo Maurer introduced the "avoid – shift – improve" model to address these issues. The "avoid" phase encourages reducing motorized trips by improving proximity and accessibility, ensuring cities are designed with transportation infrastructure, such as bus stops, integrated into the layout. The "shift" phase promotes transitioning from private vehicles to public transport, shared mobility, and non-motorized modes like walking and cycling. He advocated for expanding integrated transport systems, especially in rural areas, and suggested digitizing transport processes and offering on-demand services. Lastly, the "improve" phase focuses on enhancing vehicle design and energy efficiency. Rojo Maurer recommended developing charging centers, optimizing vehicle sizes to reduce emissions, and addressing the last-mile problem. The ultimate goal, he stated, is to create sustainable, efficient, and people-centered transport systems that support both environmental and social needs.

Lastly, Tim Dallman, Director of International Partnerships Program for the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT), focused his presentation on decarbonizing the transport sector to meet air quality and climate goals. He presented strategies identified by the ICCT as key to meeting climate targets, strategies such as advancing the transitions to zero emissions vehicles (ZEVs), advancing technologies to increase the efficiency of internal combustion fuel (ICF) vehicles, implementing "avoid" and "shift" strategies, promoting fleet renewal, and accelerating the transition to clean energy solutions. Key policies include phaseout targets for ICF vehicles, binding CO<sub>2</sub> regulations, financial incentives, expanded charging infrastructure, and increasing consumer awareness. He concluded his presentation by describing the Zero Emission Vehicle Transition Council, which involves 17 governments including Canada, Mexico, and the US, and facilitates knowledge exchange and best practices to support the transition to cleaner transportation.

Following questions from the public, the panelists proposed other alternatives for reducing transport-related emission, such as developing on-demand public transport alternatives, promoting better urban design and electrification, redirecting existing public budgets from car infrastructure to support high-quality, reliable public transit, adopting stronger regulatory frameworks to encourage investments in clean technology, and incentivizing the transition through taxes on polluting vehicles and incentives for more-efficient cars. The session concluded with in-person and online roundtable discussions in which participants answered questions regarding the most urgent topics to address, opportunities for regional collaboration, the way to integrate TEK and to create solutions for all, and examples to learn from.

## ITEM 6: Expert Panel on Solution-making for All

### Invited Speakers:

- **Ingrid Waldron**, Professor and HOPE Chair in Peace and Health in the Global Peace and Social Justice Program, McMaster University, Canada
- **Gustavo Sánchez Valle**, President of the Executive Committee of Red MOCAF, Mexico, and Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Mesoamerican Peoples and Forests Alliance (AMPB)
- **René LaPointe Jameson**, Founder and Leader, Black Girl Environmentalist–Boston HUB, and Environmental Engineer, United States

Julian Portilla introduced the third session by inviting the audience to consider how the CEC can contribute to promoting environmental justice in North America. The first speaker, Dr. Ingrid Waldron, Professor and HOPE Chair in Peace and Health in the Global Peace and Social Justice Program at McMaster University, shared her work on environmental racism in Nova Scotia and Canada, describing the social, ecological, political, and health impacts on marginalized communities. Dr. Waldron highlighted systemic issues, such as the failure of environmental assessments to address structural health determinants, leaving marginalized communities with poor health outcomes. Referencing Dr. Robert Bullard’s work on environmental racism, she emphasized the need for policies that include these communities in environmental decision-making. She advocated for the integration of TEK into environmental assessments in order to understand the impact of extraction industries on community well-being. Dr. Waldron stressed the importance of an intersectional framework to address how race, class, gender, and geography contribute to environmental vulnerability. She pointed out that Indigenous women, in particular, face higher rates of health issues linked to environmental contamination. She concluded by asking fellow panelists about their experiences with multidisciplinary partnerships in their work.

Rene LaPointe Jameson, Founder and Leader of Black Girl Environmentalist–Boston HUB, and an environmental engineer, began her presentation by describing the research she conducts to address environmental hazards faced by marginalized communities globally. As the founder of the Boston branch of Black Girl Environmentalist, Jameson emphasized the heightened vulnerability of Black women, girls, and gender-expansive individuals to environmental stresses and advocated for their inclusion in decision-making spaces. Jameson identified the root causes of environmental issues as systems of oppression: capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy. She argued that these forces harm Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities and the environment. Through the presentation of her research focused on harmful chemicals like PFAS, she recommended stricter regulations, increased transparency in manufacturing, and reduced single-use plastics. She also supports returning land to Indigenous communities, who have long been effective stewards. Finally, Jameson asked participants to imagine how the world could improve if governments invested in a just climate future instead of war, emphasizing green workforce development and public transit.

Lastly, Darcy Higgins discussed the Environmental Justice unit network established by the CEC, which focuses on fostering regional connections to better understand and address environmental issues. The network supports communities in launching climate projects through mentoring and training opportunities. In Mexico, it has facilitated new connections, including an event that featured youth and opened doors for collaboration. Higgins highlighted the growing interest in promoting climate adaptation and resilience, particularly through small-scale preparations such as heat planning in dense, low-income communities. He emphasized the importance of addressing specific issues in particular neighborhoods and working together to rebuild social bonds and connections. Higgins concluded with a call to shift funding priorities, advocating for less money to be spent on war and more on environmental justice.

To conclude, the panelists addressed several questions from the public, including how to engage with communities that are well-funded and connected versus those that are not. They emphasized that white communities can act as allies by educating themselves and understanding the systemic issues underlying environmental racism, particularly among governments and politicians. Awareness campaigns, particularly through digital media and social platforms, were also highlighted as effective tools for spreading the message and fostering collective action.

## **ITEM 7: Youth Voices on H-2030**

### **Invited Speakers:**

- **Sophie McCafferty**, Educational Program Coordinator, the Hudson Food Collective, Canada
- **Frida Treviño**, Climate Activist, Mexico
- **Agustín Ángel Bernabé**, Environmental Activist and Co-founder, Leaders4EARTH, United States

This session brought together three leaders representing the interests of young people in North America.

Frida Treviño, a climate activist from Mexico, opened the session by highlighting the anxiety youth feel regarding the triple planetary crisis and stressing the need for young people to open spaces for dialogue, decision-making, and connection. She also discussed youth's strong desire to achieve environmental justice, particularly within environmental legislation. Treviño called for enforcing existing laws to protect ecosystems, rather than creating new ones, and urged governments to respect these regulations, especially with threats from megaprojects. She also emphasized the need for marginalized communities to be central in solutions. Treviño then addressed the water crisis, which she described as a priority, and the lack of information and tools for water restoration projects. She also pointed to monoculture farming and its economic and ecological impact, urging stronger regulations. Lastly, Treviño mentioned the threat posed by ecocidal projects like the Saguaro Project, which could disrupt ecosystems and biodiversity, such as the migratory path of whales in the Sea of Cortez. Her presentation concluded with a sense of urgency for empowerment of youth and holding decision-makers accountable for the planet's future.

Next, Agustín Ángel Bernabé, Environmental Activist and Co-Founder of Leaders4EARTH, spoke about the awareness and knowledge youth already possess about environmental issues. He emphasized the importance of closely working with young people in communities, to co-create solutions at a trilateral level. He also discussed the widespread use of EO technologies and GIS tools among youth and stressed the need to ensure these tools and the data they collect are accessible and understood by local communities. Financial barriers were another key issue raised, with Ángel Bernabé noting that youth face challenges in securing grants. He suggested that different funding approaches should be explored, with a fair distribution of resources across all three countries, ensuring that everyone has equal access to funding opportunities. He also pointed to the importance of updating infrastructure and tools so that communities can easily use and access valuable information, and advocated for collaboration with city officials to make these improvements.

The last panelist, Sophie McCafferty, Educational Program Coordinator of the Hudson Food Collective, began by illustrating the challenges many young people face when using public transportation in Canada. She pointed out how, even with the costs of parking and gas, traveling by car can often be more affordable and safer than relying on public transit. McCafferty invited participants to imagine the difficulties faced by people living in rural areas, where public transportation options are even more limited. She highlighted that youth, in particular, rely heavily on public transportation to get around, making it a crucial issue for them. She called for better infrastructure that is secure and accessible to everyone, both within and between communities. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of raising awareness and

incentivizing people to use public transportation. McCafferty concluded by advocating for cities to be designed for people, not for cars, and encouraged looking for inspiration to successful communities that have tackled this issue. She suggested that we should replicate their solutions in our own unique ways to create a more sustainable and accessible transportation system.

This last panel of the day concluded with several questions from the public. One key discussion focused on agriculture's impact on the environment. Agribusiness, driven by profit, continues to eliminate biodiversity by flattening land, often pushing community land into corporate hands. This raised concerns about how to make agriculture more sustainable. Another question addressed the role of youth in creating a more sustainable world. The issue of enforcing environmental laws also arose. Finally, the discussion turned to Indigenous communities who are fighting to preserve their land from exploitation, with a focus on communal well-being rather than individual profit. The panelist highlighted the need for stronger protections for Indigenous rights and territories.

#### **ITEM 8: Day 1 Closing Comments by Julian Portilla**

Julian Portilla, the forum facilitator, expressed his gratitude to the final participant who commented on the panel. To conclude, he invited participants to the second part of the forum, which would take place the following day.

#### **ITEM 9: Day 2 Opening Remarks by Esteban Escamilla, JPAC Chair**

Esteban Escamilla, JPAC Chair, warmly welcomed the public to the second day of the public forum.

JPAC Chair Esteban Escamilla welcomed the public to day two of the forum, which would focus on three critical topics: ecosystem services and the sustainable management of biodiversity; subnational governance; and corporate responsibility and the role of the private sector in addressing the triple planetary crisis. He noted that the day would conclude with reflections from the Heads of Units at the CEC on the three thematic workstreams, an intervention by the TEKEG Facilitator, and an open dialogue between JPAC members and the public.

Escamilla encouraged the public to actively engage in the discussions and to interact with the Submissions on Enforcement Matters (SEM) Unit of the CEC. He also thanked the online audience for their participation and expressed his appreciation to forum facilitator Julian Portilla for his contributions.

#### **ITEM 10: Day 2 Ceremonial Opening**

Carlos Montaña led a traditional Indigenous welcoming ceremony, invoking the directions according to Toltec and Mexica traditions. The opening honored the Sun, symbolizing the energy of Quetzalcoatl; the north, representing the ancestors; the west, embodying the red path and the energy of women; the south, symbolizing Huitzilopochtli and the will to act; and the center, representing the origin of all beings—Mother Earth, who sustains us and forms the heart of our reality. He also highlighted the significance of the Atecocolli, a sea snail shell used throughout ceremonies and rituals—such as dance, *temazcal*, music, and the *Tequio*, or communal work—to call people together.

#### **ITEM 11: Expert Panel on Indigenous Rights and Traditional Ecological Knowledge**

##### **Invited Speakers:**

- **litoomsaokaa'sii Diandra Bruised Head**, Kainaikii, Kanai Blood Tribe, Canada

- **Jason Chernow**, Provincial Secretary of Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Management, Metis Nation within Alberta, Canada
- **Guadalupe Yesenia Hernández Márquez**, Co-President, Task Force on Indigenous and Local Knowledge, IPBES, Mexico

Guadalupe Yesenia Hernández Márquez, Co-President of the Task Force on Indigenous and Local Knowledge at IPBES, began her presentation by emphasizing the value of TEK as a source of strength for sustainability. She addressed several challenges, including the extinction of cultural diversity, the interconnectedness of nature, culture, and Indigenous languages, and the impact of the environmental crisis, which disproportionately affects Indigenous communities. She stressed the need to integrate Indigenous contributions into legal frameworks, as well as the importance of aligning global actions with local communities and integrating both modern science and traditional knowledge. She also advocated for common norms across countries, cultural relevance, and the principle of free, prior, and informed consent before using traditional knowledge. Finally, Hernández Márquez called for decision-makers to create enabling conditions that support participation, funding, and co-producing solutions. She encouraged exploring options such as responsible investment, integrating Indigenous knowledge into business practices, biocultural trade protocols, and bioeconomy, all driven by knowledge, awareness, and action.

Diandra Bruised Head, Kainai, Kanai Blood Tribe, the second panelist, began by telling the story of the Blackfoot People, who were once the warriors of the plains of North America, with their culture, governance, and economy centered around the buffalo. Following the arrival of settlers and the Indian Act, resulting in the extirpation of the buffalo and the loss of their language and culture, the Blackfoot adapted and became skilled farmers, but their success led to exploitation, as white settlers lobbied for welfare and took control of agricultural lands. In 2008, Blackfoot elders expressed the desire to bring buffalo back, leading to the drafting of the Buffalo Treaty in 2014. This treaty aimed to restore the buffalo to Blackfoot lands, with the Blackfoot Tribe in Montana moving buffalo from Alberta National Park, marking the first transboundary buffalo movement. The return of the buffalo brought pride to the Blackfoot People and sparked food security initiatives and the creation of the Intertribal Buffalo Council. In February 2021, buffalo were successfully reintroduced to the land, with young buffalo born. The Blackfoot People now aim to expand buffalo populations and create wildlife corridors between their lands. With 31,000 buffalo across North America, the Blackfoot emphasize the importance of their buffalo, lands, and traditions, sharing stories that have guided them through hard times. These lessons continue to shape their future, ensuring they remain resilient as a people.

Unfortunately, Jason Chernow, Provincial Secretary of Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Management, Metis Nation within Alberta, was not able to deliver his address, due to health reasons.

At the end of the panel, the public posed several key questions, which the panelists addressed. One was how to integrate traditional knowledge into the economic system that shapes the relationships between the three North American countries. The panelists explained the importance of making a business case for initiatives like buffalo transportation, which was funded by national parks. Another question focused on the role of social media in safeguarding Indigenous rights. The panelists highlighted its power in raising awareness and engaging public interest. They also recognized the importance of influencers in normalizing conversations about Indigenous values and issues. Finally, the panelists offered advice on conveying traditional knowledge to business and government leaders. They suggested bringing Indigenous peoples into these discussions to shift perspectives and emphasize the long-term impact of decisions. They

encouraged building relationships with Indigenous communities and fostering genuine connections to enhance understanding.

## **ITEM 12: Expert Panel and Roundtable Discussions on Ecosystem Services / Sustainable Use and Management of Biodiversity**

**Setting the Stage: Lucie Robidoux**, Head of Unit, Ecosystems, CEC

### **Invited Speakers:**

- **Kai Chan**, Professor, Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia, Canada
- **Luis Fueyo MacDonald**, Environmental Consultant, CeIBA, Mexico
- **Frankie Myers**, Principal and Co-founder, Fix the World Consulting, United States

Lucie Robidoux, Head of the Ecosystems Unit at the CEC, introduced the topic of Ecosystem Services and the Sustainable Use and Management of Biodiversity. She explained that biodiversity in North America faces common threats, and that the three countries have committed themselves to taking action to reduce these threats while meeting the needs of people. She argued that a regional approach would leverage the wealth of existing knowledge to deliver on-the-ground solutions that would integrate collective experience. Robidoux then shifted her focus to the CEC's work on ecosystem services and the sustainable use and management of biodiversity. She posed several key questions related to the opportunities and strategies for implementing actions that can strengthen the provision of ecosystem services across North America, as well as the opportunities for trilateral collaboration that can improve sustainable management of biodiversity. Finally, she invited the audience to reflect on the mechanisms and existing, community-driven approaches that can be scaled for use across the region.

Julian Portilla, forum facilitator, then gave the floor to the panelists. The session began with a presentation by Luis Fueyo MacDonald, Environmental Consultant at CeIBA, in which he highlighted the importance of ecosystem services as a concept that should be disseminated, expanded, and adopted by society. Fueyo MacDonald emphasized that ecosystem services exist because we have healthy ecosystems that have maintained invaluable biological richness, thanks to the Indigenous Peoples who have been their stewards. He then proposed addressing in four steps the interconnected topics of ecosystem services and the sustainable management of biodiversity. The first step is to build institutions that facilitate the conservation of ecosystems and support regional and subnational legal frameworks. He stressed that these institutions are not only government-based but also those created within society, such as youth and women's organizations. The second step is focused on international and regional cooperation, which Fueyo MacDonald views as essential for addressing global and local issues and planning for the future to ensure that our natural wealth continues to provide environmental services, while also ensuring local communities have the means to thrive. The third component involves national, subnational, and regional capacities to maintain the legal and institutional framework. Specifically, he highlighted agencies and commitments acquired from society, such as voluntary agreements in communities, local law, and national law. He concluded by emphasizing the final step: Article 24 of the USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC, a voluntary agreement that serves as a guiding light for the future.

The second presentation was delivered virtually by Kai Chan, Professor at the Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability at the University of British Columbia. He began by introducing the relational view. He argued that relational thinking—reintroduced by Indigenous peoples—could change science and our understanding of the world. One concrete example he provided was the issue of carbon offsets. While they have become popular, they are also associated with negative environmental and social

impacts. As part of the UBC Ecosphere Initiative, Chan and other authors published a first paper that considers the issue from a relational perspective, outlining five tenets: 1. Always address biodiversity: It is unacceptable to only optimize for carbon sequestration; carbon credits with a footprint on land or water must also consider other components. 2. Restore nature and its contributions: Offsets must cover comprehensive sets of species habitats and ecosystems, including ecosystem services or nature's contributions to people, including cultural dimensions, since people are a part of nature. 3. Restore before giving credit: Restoration must occur before credits are assigned, to offset damage. Furthermore, carbon offsets should entail immediate removal of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, not removal over the scale of several decades. 4. Co-govern: Offset developers must enable Indigenous people and local communities to participate safely and accessibly in governance of programs. 5. Prevent profiteering: Individuals and firms can profit from restoration activities, but profiteering—where financiers speculate on offsets to profit from market fluctuations—should be prevented. Kai Chan concluded by referring to the Offset Reset campaign, which seeks to address the bad reputation of carbon offsets. He suggested that the CEC work directly to change rules in the three nations to ensure that carbon offset tools are effective for biodiversity.

The final panelist to present, Frankie Myers, Principal/Co-founder of Fix the World Consulting, and Vice Chairman of the Yurok Tribe, began by sharing the story of salmon and how their population had decreased over time until they disappeared from the Klamath River. In 2002, this river suffered one of the largest fish kills (of salmon) in US history. The salmon die-off highlighted centuries of deforestation, monocultures, timber harvests, commercial fisheries' overharvesting, and gold mining. Four dams had contributed to the salmon's disappearance, due to the production of toxic blue-green algae, rising water temperatures, and reduced river flow. The only viable solution was to reconnect the basin by removing the dams. Furthermore, the problem had to be addressed holistically, including education and safety. As a result, after 20 years, there is now a free-flowing river, and salmon are returning to their habitats. To reconnect the entire basin, deforestation, monocultures, and timber harvests had to be addressed. Myers argued that the way forward is for Indigenous Peoples to regain control of their land. This led to the second-largest fisheries program on the West Coast and the creation of restoration corporations focused not only on restoration work but also on the people responsible for carrying out that work. Myers concluded by recommending that corporations focus on restoration and prioritize agreements that come from Indigenous peoples through bottom-up, grassroots approaches. He also stressed the importance of ensuring that funding reaches the communities that hold the knowledge and that we place value on the things we discuss accordingly.

To close the session, Julian Portilla, the facilitator, invited members of the public to share their questions. One question addressed the issue of incremental versus transformative change, specifically asking where the points of leverage are to cause systemic changes. In response, Chan explained that there are three kinds of such changes: the first, private actions, which are not enough for transformative change; the second, social signaling, which is outward-facing and aims to inspire others to take action; and the third, system-changing actions, which is what he studies at the UBC Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability and is striving to achieve by raising standards for carbon offsets. Another question asked whether this approach would lead to the financialization of nature. Chan responded that values are implicit in how things are brokered. Carbon offsets and credits in banks would represent the cost of the work done. From a financial perspective, it is monetary, but it also represents a moral statement, as it reflects the price that needs to be paid to achieve global standards. The final question, directed to Frankie Myers, asked whether opponents of restoration ever viewed his efforts as anti-development. Myers replied that while power generation is necessary, dam removal is a process of balance. It is not about

building everywhere but rather about building where it is foundationally appropriate, while incorporating Indigenous values. Power generation must be sustainable and balanced.

The session concluded with in-person and online roundtable discussions in which participants answered questions regarding the most urgent topics to address, opportunities for regional collaboration, the way to integrate TEK and to create solutions for all and examples to learn from.

### **ITEM 13: Expert Panel on Subnational Governments' Role in Addressing the Triple Planetary Crisis**

#### **Invited Speakers:**

- **Annie Provencher**, Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Lead, Energy, Infrastructure and Resource Management, Manitoba Métis Federation—National Government of the Red River Métis, Canada
- **Jesús Cruz López**, President, Executive Committee of the Union of Communities and *Ejid*os for Conservation of the Central Valleys of Oaxaca, Mexico
- **Jennifer Norris**, Executive Director, Wildlife Conservation Board, United States

The first presentation was delivered by Annie Provencher, from the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF). Provencher began by explaining who the Red River Métis are: "One of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, as referred to in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982." The MMF is the National Government of the Red River Métis and is the first federally recognized Métis government in Canada. The MMF is duly authorized by its citizens to address their collective Métis rights, claims, and interests, including conducting consultations and negotiating accommodations. Provencher further explained that the Red River Métis have observed significant environmental changes throughout their national homeland, which are directly linked to climate change. Federal departments are collaborating with the MMF to adjust programs and policies under Canada's Climate Plan, with a focus on advancing Red River Métis climate-change and health priorities, as well as shaping community-based climate initiatives. Several priorities moving forward include capacity-building, conducting research and collecting data to guide Métis policy, providing education and training opportunities, promoting environmental stewardship, and enhancing emergency management and disaster-risk mitigation.

The second presentation was delivered by Jennifer Norris, Executive Director of the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). She began by explaining the 30x30 Initiative, a voluntary global commitment to conserve 30% of our lands and waters by 2030. She described it as a grassroots movement in which people put pressure on legislators to act. This led to the development of a comprehensive strategy to implement the initiative on lands and coastal waters of California, resulting in 17 workshops across the state, meetings with Native American tribes, and public comments, that provided a vision. The WCB approach is to conserve and protect all types of land and coastal areas, from working lands to areas where people enjoy recreation. The objectives are to protect and restore biodiversity, expand access to nature, promote people's experience of the natural world, build resilience, and draw down carbon. Some key strategies employed by the organization include land acquisitions from private owners for permanent protection, voluntary conservation easements, protection of public lands, habitat restoration, and mitigation. Financing plays a critical role in these efforts. Specifically, California has invested \$1 billion in land protection and restoration. In November 2024, the state received \$1.2 billion USD for conservation, with 40% earmarked for underserved communities. Norris concluded by stating that the role of the CEC is to ensure that investments are made in the developing world and that financial resources are made available to everyone. One strategy to achieve this is by bringing in private, public, and philanthropic money, combining all of these to think strategically and make projects happen.

Finally, Jesús Cruz López gave a presentation on the union of communities and *ejidos* (communal lands) in the central valleys of Oaxaca, for the conservation of forests and water. According to him, communities and *ejidos* are a subnational government at the fourth level of governance, which recognizes Indigenous Peoples as public law entities with legal personality. Cruz López highlighted that 51% of Mexico's territory belongs to *ejidos* and communities, considered social property. Additionally, 81% of the country's biodiversity is located on this 51% of land. In Oaxaca, specifically, 82% of the territory belongs to *ejidos* and communities. The internal organization of such *ejidos* consists of elected representatives in community assemblies, though these representatives do not receive a salary. He pointed out that the most difficult challenge is the lack of resources to protect forests and jungles. To conclude, Cruz López discussed the aquifer in the Central Valley of Oaxaca, where 30% of the state's population is concentrated, representing the main tourism and economic center and consequently having a high demand for water. The Community Social Organization he represents is composed of 21 communities that work together to manage Payment for Environmental Services (PES), through concurrent payments, making it the largest such initiative in the country with both a social and conservation focus. The action plan for the union in 2024 includes initiatives such as a sanitation plan, a fire management plan, a community monitoring plan, and the reforestation of native species, all while integrating gender equity into its efforts.

The session concluded with questions from the public. The first question was, "What enables your organization to do what it does?" The respondents emphasized their worldview—a way of relating to the land that can be traced back to their ancestors. Another key factor was the importance of listening to citizens and engaging in consultation sessions to better understand their desires. Lastly, the panelists highlighted the significance of TEK and intergenerational experience.

#### **ITEM 14: Expert Panel on the Private Sector's Role in Addressing the Triple Planetary Crisis**

##### **Invited Speakers:**

- **Elizabeth Dove**, Executive Director, UN Global Compact Network, Canada
- **Iván Vicente Cornejo Villalva**, Director, International Financial Organizations, *Nacional Financiera* (Nafin), Mexico
- **Alejandro Morales Heimlich**, Chief Financial Officer, Toroto, Mexico
- **Andrew Lawson Carranco**, Board Member, North American Strategy for Competitiveness (NASCO), United States

The final panel began with a presentation by Elizabeth Dove, Executive Director of United Nations (UN) Global Compact Network Canada. Launched in 1999 with just 40 companies, Global Compact has grown to include 70 country networks, including in Canada, Mexico, and the US, with over 20,000 companies committed to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The initiative Forward Faster targets five key areas for the private sector to make significant impact on by 2030: gender equality, climate action, living wage, water resilience, and finance and investment. Dove emphasized that, while the private sector has significant potential to contribute to sustainable development through voluntary commitments, her experience has shown that corporate leaders tend to favor legislation. Legislation helps align their value chains with company-wide goals, reducing costs and promoting fairness in the marketplace. Furthermore, it provides reassurance to investors by minimizing risks and ensuring compliance.

Dove centered the rest of her presentation around five key considerations that businesses want governments to keep in mind when engaging with them on environmental issues. First, convening and consulting with businesses is crucial to understanding pain points and opportunities for change, as well as to building trust in ecolabels and to addressing greenwashing. Second, clarity is essential; the time

between a law being passed and the details of accountability should be shortened; she cited examples like the Competitions Act and Modern Slavery Act, where details of implementation were delayed. Third, consistency is needed to harmonize standards across regions, using existing leadership as an opportunity for collaboration. Fourth, collaboration and having a mindset of intentionality is key to understanding the ecosystem within government and legislation. Fifth, businesses should champion corporate leadership to build sector-wide buy-in, and governments should have the courage to create a legislative framework that pushes companies toward meaningful action.

Next, Alejandro Morales Heimlich, CFO of Toroto, a company dedicated to climate action, presented an example of how the private sector can contribute to environmental sustainability. Toroto focuses on nature-based solutions to ecosystem restoration, specifically through water infiltration and carbon capture. By partnering with large corporations to integrate into their supply chains and ensure that aquifers are replenished at their facilities, the company improves water security while promoting environmental resilience. These efforts are carried out in close partnership with local communities, ensuring that these efforts contribute to both local development and broader climate goals. Toroto also works on carbon sequestration. The company develops voluntary carbon projects, securing investments to fund projects that sequester carbon. Once these projects are certified by international organizations, Toroto sells the generated carbon credits, with international corporations purchasing them to offset their emissions. Toroto has successfully completed over 15 carbon sequestration projects, including one in southeastern Mexico. The project has sold carbon credits, with 75% of the proceeds directed back to local communities.

Despite its success, Toroto faces challenges inherent to balancing social, environmental, and financial objectives as a triple bottom line company. The company struggles with securing sufficient resources for its climate initiatives and encounters difficulties in transferring funds between the Global North and Global South. To overcome these barriers, Toroto seeks financial guarantees and the support of institutions in order to continue scaling its projects, especially in regions like Mexico.

The third presenter, Andrew Lawson Carranco, discussed the work of the North American Strategy for Competitiveness Organization (NASCO) and highlighted how three of its members are addressing key environmental challenges. NADBank, focused on developing infrastructure projects along the US-Mexican border, is financing initiatives related to waste, water, energy, sustainable energy, sustainable cities, and sustainable manufacturing. Mary Kay, as part of its equity efforts, manages 60% of its research and development (R&D) through women, and leads environmental and corporate responsibility initiatives, such as the preservation of shea trees through intrapreneurship, while also empowering employees. Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) is working on hydrogen-powered locomotives, replacing old engines from the late 80s and early 90s with more-efficient electric motors. To finalize, Lawson Carranco emphasized the importance of promoting bottom-up approaches, for their potential to drive innovation and motivate companies to implement sustainable practices and move forward with impactful solutions.

Iván Cornejo Villalva, the final panelist, provided an insightful overview of the role development banks play in sustainability efforts. He highlighted *Nacional Financiera* (Nafin), the third oldest bank in Latin America and one of the six development banks in Mexico. Noting its active involvement in supporting climate action and sustainable development, particularly through its work with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Nafin facilitates sustainability by providing resources via a network of financial intermediaries, including both commercial and non-commercial banks, rather than by offering direct credit to SMEs. These intermediaries collaborate with Nafin to offer financial products tailored to various

sectors, such as commerce, industry, and services. Cornejo Villalva emphasized that while Nafin is a traditional bank, it is innovating and expanding its sustainability portfolio.

Cornejo Villalva also discussed the evolving landscape of sustainable finance in Mexico, shaped by regulatory frameworks from the UN, multilateral banks, and the pressing demands of the climate crisis. One key issue he addressed was how legislation and available resources are crucial in directing large pools of capital to address various solutions for sustainability. Nafin's strategy includes conducting self-assessments to identify areas for improvement and using digital platforms to communicate progress, with inclusion being a key impact area. A notable achievement is Nafin's issuance of sustainability-linked bonds, which provide favorable conditions for raising resources. The bank also aims to increase sustainable projects in its portfolio, from 10% in 2030 to 20% in the future. In response to the extinguishing of the Mexican Climate Change Fund, Nafin established the Sustainable Fund, which now manages 70 million dollars to support initiatives from various levels of government, showcasing how development banks are critical in fostering sustainable development in Mexico.

At the end of the panel, the audience posed questions. One asked how municipal governments could be encouraged to collaborate with the private sector on climate issues, with public-private partnerships and stronger ties to commercial banks suggested as potential solutions. Another question focused on Toronto's approach to ensuring social acceptance of carbon credit projects, especially in areas with limited community understanding. The response emphasized the importance of community input, clear communication, and ensuring that most resources benefit local communities directly. Being physically present in project areas was also highlighted as key for effective engagement.

#### **ITEM 15: Reflections from the Workstreams**

##### **Invited Speakers:**

- **Orlando Cabrera-Rivera**, EO/GIS Tools Workstream, Head of Unit, Environmental Quality, CEC
- **Armando Yáñez Sandoval**, Sustainable Transportation Workstream, Head of Unit, Green Growth, CEC
- **Lucie Robidoux**, Ecosystem Services/Sustainable Use and Management of Biodiversity Workstream, Head of Unit, Ecosystems, CEC

Julian Portilla, the facilitator, invited the heads of the CEC units to the stage to share their reflections on each of the workstreams of Horizon 2030. Orlando Cabrera began the conversation by talking about Earth observation technologies and other GIS tools. He began by emphasizing the importance of meaningful learning and collaboration in leveraging Earth observation technologies and GIS tools to tackle climate change, both in terms of mitigation and adaptation. He highlighted a recent survey conducted to identify the most pressing areas of focus, with two key topics emerging: extreme events and water security. These areas were closely interconnected, with both requiring urgent attention. Cabrera pointed out that tools developed at the national level often lacked direct relevance to local realities, highlighting the need for better alignment. He underscored that access to information is crucial, as well as the capacity to use such technology effectively. This led to the question of how to better train people to use these tools, ensuring they can understand the information and analysis and apply it in ways that benefit their local contexts. Finally, Cabrera raised an important issue regarding data sovereignty, particularly in relation to Indigenous communities. He noted that this remains an area that has yet to be adequately addressed, and it is vital that the sovereignty of data be respected and considered as part of any climate-related efforts moving forward.

Next, Armando Yáñez Sandoval, Head of the Green Growth Unit at the CEC, shared his reflection on the session concerning sustainable transportation for pollution reduction. Armando highlighted the significant environmental impact of the transport sector and stressed the importance of promoting sustainability within this area. He pointed out that when considering economic activities, we must look beyond financial gains and recognize the fundamental role that activities like transportation play in sustaining our lives. In this context, he noted that transport is a key pillar of human activity and must be recognized not only as an economic issue but also as a social determinant and a public health concern. Yáñez Sandoval addressed the regional work priorities, stressing that there are no "silver bullets" for solving transportation challenges. Instead, coordinated and communicative efforts across multiple fronts are needed. He concluded by acknowledging the cross-cutting issues involved, such as environmental justice, resource exploitation, and the differentiated impacts of transportation on different communities. He called for financial incentives and community support to help drive these changes. Finally, Yáñez Sandoval stressed the importance of making transportation safe, accessible, and sustainable, and advocated for cities designed for humans, not vehicles, with transport systems that serve the needs of all, rather than the profit motives of the transport industry.

Finally, Lucie Robidoux, Head of the Ecosystems Unit at the CEC, shared her reflections on the session about ecosystem services, sustainable use and management of biodiversity. She stressed the importance of integrating theoretical, methodological, and Indigenous knowledge in this work and advocated for a shift from production-driven to conservation-based systems. Robidoux highlighted the need for community-centered, bottom-up approaches, including cultural revival, as part of conservation efforts. She also called for policy and legal frameworks to be led by communities. Then, she identified challenges such as inclusivity in policy development, disparities in education and resources, and inadequate prioritization of conservation efforts, and proposed actions such as improving access to ecosystem services, creating participatory tools for territorial assessment, and strengthening regional networks. She also emphasized the importance of empowering communities and integrating policy developments to meet conservation challenges, including updating species-at-risk frameworks. Robidoux pointed out urgent issues like the water crisis, pollution along migratory routes, and economic pressures limiting community involvement. She concluded by stressing the need for sharing knowledge, supporting community-driven leadership, and empowering Indigenous leadership, and the need for comprehensive policy change.

#### **ITEM 16: Intervention by Kathy Hodgson-Smith, TEKEG Facilitator**

Kathy Hodgson-Smith, TEKEG Facilitator, began her intervention by thanking Amelia Reyna Monteros Guijón for her opening words and acknowledging the leadership of JPAC and the CEC in organizing the event. Reflecting on the presentations and submissions made during the forum, Hodgson-Smith emphasized the vital role of Indigenous Peoples as leaders in biodiversity management, conservation, and climate change action. She noted that any work advancing Indigenous leadership, promoting traditional knowledge, and supporting cultural ways of life directly contributes to the goals of biodiversity management and climate action.

Hodgson-Smith then stressed the importance of strategies that respect Indigenous rights and environmental justice, with budgets dedicated to these efforts at the core of any approach. She called for a "nature first" approach and urged looking at mechanisms to implement ideas shared over the last two days. She also highlighted the importance of knowledge-sharing, particularly within Indigenous communities, where specific roles for Indigenous women are recognized. In particular, she stressed the need to respect these perspectives while maintaining adherence to free, prior, and informed consent, and

balancing access to information with the protection of rights and self-determination as outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Hodgson-Smith called for greater engagement with young people, noting the inspiring youth presentations and the importance of considering their voices in future discussions. She emphasized the need for meaningful participation of Indigenous peoples and local communities, supporting holistic approaches and financial mechanisms that promote inclusivity and build the capacity of local communities while advancing self-determination. Finally, she underscored that Indigenous peoples should be consulted through their own institutions and governments. At the end of her intervention, she thanked Julian Portilla for his leadership as a facilitator throughout the forum.

#### **ITEM 17: Open Dialogue with the JPAC Members**

JPAC Chair, Esteban Escamilla, opened the public dialogue by inviting JPAC members to the stage to share their reflections. Felicia Marcus, JPAC member and session moderator, began by thanking CEC staff for organizing the forum. She recalled the meeting's focus on planning for the next few years under the workstreams of the CEC H-2030 Initiative: Earth observation (EO) technologies and GIS tools, sustainable transportation and ecosystem services, and sustainable biodiversity management. She also highlighted the H-2030 Initiative's cross-cutting themes: traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous knowledge; environmental justice; subnational governments; and private-sector engagement. Marcus emphasized the complexities and possibilities within each area and stressed the importance of gathering feedback until January 24 to inform advice for the ministers of each country, which will guide future strategic planning. She underscored that the collective efforts of the three nations are greater than the sum of their parts.

Next, Marcus identified key areas for impact, particularly in EO technologies and GIS tools, noting the need for respectful data-sharing frameworks that benefit local government institutions. She highlighted the need for evidence-based decision-making, urging improved data accessibility and the creation of frameworks that integrate technical, environmental, social, and traditional knowledge. More generally, regarding the three workstreams, she called for creating spaces for multi-actor knowledge exchange and intergenerational collaboration, ensuring historically excluded voices are given a platform. Marcus emphasized the importance of adopting community-driven, bottom-up approaches to identify needs and create tailored solutions. While solutions must benefit everyone, they cannot be one-size-fits-all, she noted. Context-specific approaches are essential, to foster participation and inclusion, acknowledging diverse values, histories, and systemic exclusions. Holistic thinking is crucial, particularly when addressing externalities and impacts, such as the environmental effects of electric vehicle (EV) production and of mining, as we strive to meet sustainability targets.

Marcus emphasized the need to equip everyone with the tools and knowledge required for informed decision-making. This involves facilitating capacity-building and data integration at the national level, while respecting ownership and integrating diverse knowledge systems. Marcus also called for new models that embrace intersectionality and relational values, shifting focus from profit-driven goals to more-sustainable, people-centered approaches. Such models would encourage collaboration; co-generate priorities, initiatives, projects, and regulatory frameworks; and cultivate champions for the cause. Additionally, she advocated for prioritizing nature- and human-centric goals over profit, fostering cooperation through communities on practice, multi-actor engagement, and inclusive knowledge-sharing.

Lastly, Marcus also reflected on the ongoing planetary crisis, highlighting that we are in the midst of the fourth planetary crisis—characterized by cultural loss, inequity of impacts, and exclusion. She concluded

by acknowledging the challenge of managing "ego-systems" rather than ecosystems and urged the audience to engage in the public consultation, emphasizing that their input would help shape future progress. Marcus ended by thanking the youth panel for their bold contributions and their pivotal role in shaping the future. She then invited her JPAC colleagues to share their reflections on the forum discussions.

Octaviana V. Trujillo was the first to speak, expressing gratitude to everyone present for making the time to participate and engage. She shared her pride, as an Indigenous woman, in knowing that the CEC has made significant strides in weaving Indigenous perspectives into its work and in increasing the participation of Indigenous experts and individuals in its activities. Her deep appreciation for the years she's spent as a JPAC member was evident, noting how the knowledge and perspectives shared at the tables had always impressed her.

Next, Robert Varney shared his thoughts, expressing how impressed he was by the level of active participation in the meeting, both in person and remotely. He highlighted the challenge of determining which items need funding while recognizing that resources are limited and difficult budgets lay ahead. In the face of these challenges, he emphasized the need to establish priorities and stretch available resources as much as possible. Varney pointed out that while resources are scarce, federal agencies might be able to contribute, urging a strategic, cost-effective approach. He also reminded everyone that environmental work remains a crucial component of the USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC.

Elizabeth Whitsitt, joining virtually, shared her reflections last. She emphasized the importance of evidence-based decision-making and policymaking, expressing her admiration for the presentations on mapping and the potential for information-sharing. Whitsitt noted that evidence-based approaches have become a key driver at both the regional and global trade levels. She encouraged the group to consider how their advice to ministers could enhance existing efforts or spark new initiatives.

Echoing Trujillo's sentiments, Whitsitt praised the CEC for prioritizing the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives within the organization, though she acknowledged that much work remains. She emphasized the need to continuously evaluate priorities and feedback, asking how the CEC can better support Indigenous economies in ways that are genuinely effective for them. She concluded with a final plea for everyone to remember the importance of cooperation, even as countries diverge in foreign policy and other decisions, and emphasized the collective responsibility to consider advice that can bring people together.

The floor was then open for public contributions, and members of the public, identifying themselves as Indigenous, took the floor. A member of the public shared a powerful message given to him by the Hopi tribe during a walking journey from Mexico to Los Angeles: native communities of the world will reconnect, with the eighth generation taking on the responsibility of caring for Mother Earth for the benefit of future generations. With a seashell, the Elder passed down the responsibility to protect the Earth, ensuring that it would be cared for by our children and their children. As part of his tribute, he chanted in Purépecha, invoking a connection to his roots and the global responsibility that all nations share. Another participant recalled the importance of policy makers, elders and academics having the vision to continue with life on planet Earth, including youth calling to recover ancestral knowledge to restore the degradation of the planet, and highlighted the need to leaving behind racial supremacy and religious fundamentalism. Another member of the public called for uniting personal, societal and government efforts to save the planet, in the three nations, and emphasized the need to include the population and local communities in driving change by relying on the knowledge of Indigenous and local communities.

### **ITEM 18: Closing Remarks by Esteban Escamilla, JPAC Chair**

Esteban Escamilla, JPAC Chair for 2024, shared the following closing remarks of the Public Forum:

"We are currently living through a civilizational crisis that spans multiple dimensions, including climate change, pollution, and the loss of biodiversity. These challenges provide us with an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue, to build collectively, and to reflect on how those who were once excluded are now stepping forward as the protagonists of change. These groups—Indigenous peoples, native communities, and First Nations—hold invaluable knowledge and perspectives that can guide us toward a better future. Together, we have the potential to build something meaningful in North America. By identifying opportunities for collaboration, we can pave the way for more-sustainable and inclusive solutions. I want to express my sincere gratitude to all the participants, speakers, and CEC staff who made this event possible. A special thank you to our JPAC colleagues, the TEKEG, those who joined us virtually, and the interpreter team for their invaluable support. Your contributions have been vital in enriching this forum. All the information shared here will be essential as we move forward with the JPAC's recommendations to the council. I encourage everyone to follow the CEC's social media channels to stay informed and connected. Finally, I wish you all a wonderful end to the year, filled with joy and the warmth of the festivities."

### **ITEM 19: Traditional Closing Ceremony**

A closing by Amelia Reyna Monteros Guijón and Carlos Montaña was conducted to bring the Public Forum to a conclusion. Monteros Guijón began by emphasizing the deep significance of rituals and ceremonies, highlighting how they are an essential part of their cultural identity. She expressed her gratitude to everyone present, thanking them for their time and engagement, and particularly acknowledged the Zapotec sister who had shared mezcal to connect with the four elements. This gesture, she explained, symbolized the duality of life and was an integral part of closing the ritual in the Valley of Anáhuac. Monteros Guijón proceeded to offer drops of mezcal toward the East, thanking the place where the sun rises for providing intelligence and guidance. She asked that this light illuminate humanity's path and requested a touch of *Atecocolli*. She then turned to the West, offering her gratitude to the place of the warrior women, where knowledge shared during the event could help nurture the Earth. The North was honored with an offering to the place of wisdom, where ancestors reside, and the South was thanked for its will and the work that each participant had contributed during the forum. Monteros Guijón closed her tribute to the sacred elements—water, fire, air, and earth—and the CEC's commitment to ensuring they remain untainted for a healthy humanity, filled with love.

Carlos Montaña then took the floor and expressed his gratitude to all attendees. He celebrated the opportunity to see everyone's faces and hearts after these two days of reflection, love, and collective work for Mother Earth. Montaña shared his wish to close the ceremony in a Teotihuacan style, addressing the great giver of life, Palmwnowani, and Moyocoyatzin, the self-creating entity. He called on Tloquenahuaque, who is always near, and the breath of life. At the conclusion, Montaña led the audience in reciting the sacred mantra of Anahuac, explaining that the name "Mexico" is not only the name of a country, but also a powerful mantra shared by all. He began by saying "Mexico" and invited the audience to respond seven times, closing the chant together with them. Montaña ended by expressing heartfelt thanks for the work of love, light, and consciousness that had been shared during the forum, leaving everyone with a sense of unity and purpose.

**ITEM 20: Adjournment**—at 5:36 pm

## **Appendix 1 – Questions for the Roundtables Discussion**

### **1) Initial Questions**

- Which topics did you find most urgent, important or compelling and why?
- What key topics were missing?

### **2) Opportunities for regional collaboration (this includes any collaboration among key actors (e.g., private sector and academia) at the national or binational level (e.g., creation of networks and communities of practice) that could be expanded across the region.**

- What is happening nationally or binationally that would benefit from trilateral collaboration?
- What transboundary issue(s) demand(s) a coordinated, collective response and why?
- Who else should be at the table to talk about these issues?

### **3) Solution-making for All**

- How can IK/TEK enrich solution-making?
- What environmental justice opportunities are present?
- How can subnational actors (especially those within urban areas and cities) be engaged?
- What is the role/opportunity for private-sector engagement?

### **4) Examples to Learn From**

- What has been done before that we can learn from?
- What are examples of best practices, case studies and examples of what has worked that could be replicated, extended, etc.?

### **5) Other Topics of Discussion**

- What are three things your table wants the three countries' national environmental authorities to take away from this meeting?