



## **Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) Ministerial Statement** *Fifteenth Regular Session of the CEC Council*

**Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 26 June 2008**—We, the environment ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States, members of the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) met for our annual Regular Session and consulted with our Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) and the public on 26 June 2008.

This year marks our fifteenth year of collaborative work under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), the environmental side accord to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Results assessed at our meeting reinforce the importance of both NAFTA and the NAAEC in raising environmental standards across all three countries, promoting the effective enforcement of environmental law, and accelerating the role of trade and commerce in pursuing market-based solutions to accomplish ever-higher environmental performance in North America. We appreciate the discussion on NAFTA and the environment, which identified opportunities for the Parties' future interaction on trade and the environment.

Recent accomplishments noted today include fulfillment of our 2007 decision to prepare conservation action plans in support of both the monarch butterfly and the phenomenon of its continental migration, as well as supporting Mexico's aggressive new strategy to protect the world's most endangered marine mammal, the *Vaquita* porpoise. We also directed the North American Marine Protected Areas Network (NAMPAN) to build on its excellent work in establishing a foundation for marine conservation by extending its efforts to report on marine health using ecological scorecards.

Cooperation among our three countries has also generated significant progress in reducing risk to human and environmental health from several dangerous chemicals. Our efforts have led to the elimination or 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. Our new chemicals management agenda includes enhanced and comparable reporting on the production and use of chemicals, continent-wide environmental and human bio-monitoring and assessment of emissions and discharges, and collaboration to reduce the risk from emerging substances and chemicals of mutual concern. This improved strategy will strengthen North American cooperation and responds directly to the growing influence of global management needs as well as goals set at the North American Leaders' Summit in 2007.

Increased trade can provide opportunities for mutually supportive economic and environmental outcomes. However, we also recognize the potential for increased risks to our environment, and that in a global market, close cooperation is essential to protect the North American public and environment. We face a rapidly growing threat to air quality and human health from the importation and widespread use of non-compliant small engine products. Accordingly, we are pleased to announce that our enforcement officials will collaborate on intelligence and operational support to combat the importation of such products. We also note the successful conclusion of the Fourth North American Symposium on Assessing the Environmental Effects of Trade: Services and the Environment and the understanding that has been gained through these discussions.

North America today is considerably different than when our countries first entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement. Beyond the environmental benefits from increased cooperation among our countries it is clear that sustainable environmental progress can only be secured when environmental values and objectives are embraced by the private sector and embedded in the market for goods and services. Today we are pleased to announce the establishment of Green Suppliers Partnerships that span the North American auto sector, from Canada to Mexico. This is particularly important when we note that motor vehicles and parts account for the largest share of intraregional trade, and specialization has been a contributing factor to the expansion of trade since 1994.

We note the important work of the CEC Secretariat in preparing a comprehensive report on the opportunities and challenges for Green Building in North America. We shared the efforts of each of our countries to encourage energy performance improvements in our building sectors and we note the very real environmental benefits and critical importance of continued work to accelerate the market uptake of green building in the construction and renovation of commercial and residential buildings throughout North America.

We note that the CEC Secretariat has recently completed a succinct report on key issues related to the state of our environment, as requested at our last Council Session. We look forward to continued input, including from our Joint Public Advisory Committee, on the outlook for major environmental trends affecting North America over the coming decades.

We reaffirm our commitment to continue and strengthen work on key North American environmental challenges and agree that the CEC's Strategic Plan for 2010–2015 will be both focused and results-oriented, so that we can measure our successes from year to year.

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*The CEC was established by Canada, Mexico and the United States to build cooperation among the NAFTA partners in implementing the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), the environmental side accord to the NAFTA. The CEC addresses environmental issues of continental concern, with particular attention to the environmental challenges and opportunities presented by continent-wide free trade. The Council, the CEC's governing body, is composed of the federal environment ministers (or equivalent) of the three countries and meets at least once a year. The Council members are Canadian Environment Minister John Baird, Mexican Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada, and US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) is a 15-member, independent, volunteer body that provides advice and public input to Council on any matter within the scope of NAAEC.*

For more information on any of the topics reviewed by Council, visit <http://www.cec.org>.