

## **CEC 1995 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **JPAC Report**

The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), together with the Council of Ministers and the Secretariat constitutes the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

This is probably the first instance of an intergovernmental agreement integrating an advisory mechanism of independent citizens within the formal structure of an international governmental organization.

The JPAC is composed of fifteen members, five from each of the three countries, appointed by the respective governments. It acts as a single, transnational body. Its members act independently of outside authority. Their responsibility is to provide the Council with their best advice on all matters within the scope of the Agreement.

At its first meeting in Washington, in July 1994, the JPAC adopted the vision statement expressing its mandate and its role. This also represents the goals JPAC set for itself and against which it expects to be judged.

To implement the vision, the Committee has two essential and complementary responsibilities. The first is to provide Advice to the Council and information to the Secretariat. The second is to act as an extension of the Commission to the public; a link between people and organizations interested in the health of the North American environment.

#### **Advice to the Council**

Acting as a single body, the JPAC formulates specific Advice to the Council. This advice is discussed and shaped at the meeting of the Committee and submitted to the Council by its Chair.

In its first year, the JPAC submitted formal advice on eight subjects, ranging from the extension of the NAFTA (which we welcomed, while emphasizing the need for simultaneous accession to the cooperative relationship of the environmental agreement as well as the trade agreement), to providing guidelines for the implementation of Articles 14 and 15 on Enforcement.

At its meeting in Oaxaca in October 1995, Council expressed its appreciation of the Advice provided by the JPAC and its confidence in the Committee. Council requested Advice on the establishment of the North American Environmental Fund, the implementation of the Report on Migratory Bird Mortality at the Silva Reservoir and on CEC's 1996 Program, all of which was provided in December 1995, and will be subjects of JPAC's ongoing deliberations. JPAC Advice to the Council is available upon request to the Commission for Environmental Cooperation Secretariat.

## **Outreach**

It is of great importance to the JPAC that it act in an open way, that it be receptive to all expressions of opinion from the public, and that it take active steps to promote transparency and dialogue. Thus, the Committee decided at its very first session that its meetings would be public, that is, open to any interested individual or organization.

It also decided that it would be important to consult formally with a broader public on important issues and key policy matters. In its first year of activity, the JPAC organized the first formal trilateral consultation on an environmental matter. On behalf of the Commission, the JPAC solicited views from interested public on the procedural guidelines that facilitate representations by non-governmental organizations under Articles 14 and 15 of the Agreement.

In addition to soliciting public comments on the draft procedures, the JPAC worked with the Council to organize the Ministers' meeting with the public at the Commission's Annual Meeting in Oaxaca, Mexico in October.

## **The Way Ahead**

The Agreement requires the JPAC to meet once a year. However, in its first full year of operation, the Committee has taken a much more active role. With the help of the Secretariat, the JPAC has organized and participated in the first North American consultation. It participated in meetings of the Alternate Representatives of the Council to provide its perspective on policy matters and the CEC's programs, as well as on the organization of the Commission's annual meetings.

The Committee intends to continue as active a role as possible in discharging its responsibilities to provide advice and to reach out. As the Commission learns and benefits from its first year of experience, the JPAC will become an increasingly useful and effective member of this unique and promising institution, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

Jaques Gérin, Chairman (1995)

## JPAC Vision Statement

The Joint Public Advisory Committee, which together with the Council of Ministers and the Secretariat comprise the NAFTA Commission for Environmental Cooperation, represents a unique institution charged with seizing an historic opportunity.

The North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation set a precedent as a formal environmental agreement adopted in parallel with a trade agreement, and the Commission it created also set a precedent by including a public, nongovernmental advisory group as one of its components. The JPAC was established as a cooperative mechanism to advise the Council in its deliberations and to advise the Secretariat in its planning and activities.

Our vision is to promote continental cooperation in ecosystem protection and sustainable economic development, and to ensure active public participation and transparency in the actions of the full Commission.

While we come from three different nations, and have different institutional connections, we serve on the JPAC as individual citizens of the North American continent, joined in a commitment to preserving and enhancing our common environment and to achieving a sustainable society.

The JPAC will work to provide firm leadership and constructive contributions to build a trilateral model of collaboration, consensus building, and consensus-based results. The JPAC is, in effect, a model for the future in a process which is without precedent, and which presents a great opportunity for cooperative progress.

26 July 1994 Washington, D.C.

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