

SESSION 05-01 OF ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVES

SUMMARY RECORD

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) Council, represented by its Alternate Representatives, met via conference call on 13 January 2005. Ms. Norine Smith (Canada) chaired the meeting. Mr. José Manuel Bulás and Mr. Jerry Clifford represented Mexico and the United States, respectively. Mr. Arturo Duran, JPAC Chair, represented the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) and Mr. William Kennedy, CEC Executive Director, represented the Secretariat. Ms. Nathalie Daoust, Council Secretary, acted as secretary for the session. Other officials of the Parties and the Secretariat were also in attendance.

Item 1 Introductions and review of agenda and objectives (including reports by the Executive Director and JPAC Chair)

The Alternate representatives exchanged views on the state of preparedness for the upcoming meeting of the Alternate Representatives. All three representatives indicated that some additional internal consultation was required but felt confident that a substantive meeting could take place. The Alternate Representatives confirmed that their next meeting would be held in Los Cabos on January 27-28, 2005.

The Alternate Representatives adopted the agenda based on the provisional agenda.

The Executive Director reported that the Secretariat had recently conducted an initial round of exchange and discussion on the project proposals as they met separately with the Alternate Representatives and their staff in the three capitals. He indicated that he looked forward to the meeting in Los Cabos and was hopeful the Parties would approve the program and budget on that occasion. He reiterated that the Secretariat stands ready to begin implementing the work program for 2005.

The JPAC Chair reported on a recent visit to Montreal and an informal meeting with the CEC Executive Director and Director of Programs. He indicated that the meeting served as an opportunity to discuss the draft project proposals and that JPAC would soon hold a conference call to review these and issue a series of comments. He urged the Parties to approve the CEC program and budget for 2005 as soon as possible to allow the Secretariat to begin implementation. The Alternate representatives welcomed JPAC's perspective and invited the JPAC Chair to provide JPAC's comments directly to the Secretariat prior to the meeting in Los Cabos. The JPAC Chair also reported that JPAC would be holding its next meeting in the Spring, likely in March, in order to prepare for the Council Session. He conveyed JPAC's intention to improve the interaction and foster an informal dialogue with the Council and the Alternate Representatives. This suggestion was received favorably from the US who expressed their desire to develop an informal collaborative exchange with JPAC. In closing, the JPAC representative stressed that his personal goal was to act as a bridge between JPAC and the Parties.

Item 2 Overview of draft Strategic Plan and budget situation

The Chair invited the Secretariat to introduce the revised budget submitted on 5 January which describes two scenarios for the implementation of the projects identified by the Parties' Experts and elaborated as proposals by the Secretariat under the three pillars of the Puebla Declaration. The Secretariat explained that the budget presented was balanced and reflected the available funds of nearly \$3.2 millions. The accelerated budget scenario envisions rapid implementation of the new projects while accelerating the phasing-out of current activities. The gradual scenario permits completion of current activities over a more extended timeframe and slower introduction of some of the Puebla Declaration initiatives. The Alternate Representatives exchanged views on the two budget scenarios and concurred that, given the valuable work underway and resources invested thus far, they all felt more supportive of a gradual approach.

The Canadian representative commented that the Parties may wish to explore the future of the working groups under the new operational plan and suggested that the working groups be encouraged to carry out any work that reaches beyond the capacity of the CEC on a party to party basis. She suggested that the CEC act mainly as a convenor by providing a forum for the working groups to share expertise and discuss strategies and implementation. The US and Mexican representatives were both in agreement with this approach although the US representative indicated that he needed to consult internally before making any commitment in this regard. However, for the year 2005, the Alternate Representatives agreed that the number of face-to-face working group meetings should be kept to a maximum amount of two meetings per year and also agreed to make a specific request to the working groups to report annually on priorities, accomplishments, and results.

Item 3 Review of project proposals, and current initiatives

The Alternate Representatives exchanged views on the project proposals presented by the Secretariat. The Mexican representative asked the Secretariat to clarify the consultation process carried out, in particular with the working groups, in developing the draft project proposals. The Executive Director noted that its consultation had been solely with the Parties and their team of experts and that the Secretariat would be forwarding to the Parties by 17 January 2005 an explanatory note providing the main rationale behind and key implications of the two proposed budget scenarios. The Mexican representative indicated that they would also be distributing comments received from their technical experts on the draft project proposals as well as suggestions for an accelerated implementation of the new priorities. He pointed out that the project on Capacity Building Needs Assessment for Mexico needed to be initiated as soon as possible.

In discussing the information pillar, the Mexican representative cautioned that the CEC should not be duplicating the work already carried out by other agencies, in particular in the case of the State of the Environment report. The US information expert commented that the other projects identified under the information pillar did not provide for a system that would provide linkages between its different components and enable the Parties to access the information being collected. He expressed the need for CEC information activities to be redesigned to allow for a better measurement of results of environmental programs as well as a means to improved

management of environmental agencies resources. The US Alternate Representative suggested that a strategic plan be developed to capture the interest of the Parties in this area. As a general comment, the Mexican representative pointed out that, in his view, the projects presented under the information for decision-making pillar still required further iterations to meet their expectations. The US representative suggested the phasing-out of the Law and Policy Information Service project. The Canadian representative proposed to consider the future of this activity during the conference call of the information experts to be held on 14 January 2005.

In reviewing current activities, a question was raised by the US representative concerning the level of funding required for completing the SMOC NARAPs over the next five years. The Secretariat indicated that approximately the same level of funding would be required each year.

The Mexican representative indicated that, in the interest of expediting the approval process of the work program, the Mexican capacity building and trade and environment experts would be attending the meeting in Los Cabos. The Canadian representative used this opportunity to express concern about the delay taken by the Article 10(6) team in reviewing the projects proposed under the trade and environment pillar. The Mexican representative confirmed that an Article 10(6) working level conference call was scheduled for 18 January 2005. In preparation for this conference call, the Alternate Representatives requested that the Secretariat develop draft project proposals for three initiatives: Investigating Invasive Species Pathways in North America, Assess and Mitigate the Risk, Green Purchasing, and Green Goods for Sustainable Use.

Item 4 Other regular business

The Canadian representative suggested that a discussion be held in Los Cabos regarding the upcoming Council Session as well as a discussion on how to foster a broader engagement of stakeholders in the context of the Operational Plan 2005-2007. The US representative supported this suggestion and added that they had recently sought the advice of the US National Advisory Committee and Government Advisory Committee regarding the engagement of the private sector in the activities of the CEC.