

A SHARED VISION

Toward Sustainability in North America

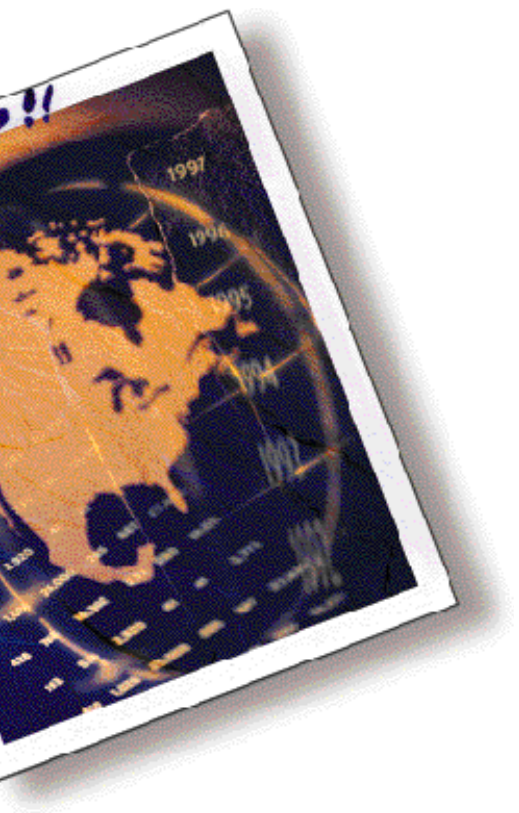
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An Approach to
Environment and Development
in the Context
of the North American
Free Trade Agreement



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A NORTH AMERICAN APPROACH TO TRADE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (NAFTA)

The 1994 agreement under which Canada, Mexico and the United States agreed to lower tariffs, thus encouraging the exchange of goods and services among the three countries.

NORTH AMERICAN AGREEMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION (NAAEC)

This environmental side accord to NAFTA has the goal of ensuring that freer trade does not lead to environmental degradation. It also creates a broader approach towards achieving more sustainable forms of economic development on the continent.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth and activities that emphasize long-term environmental, economic and social stewardship, enabling the needs of the present to be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

COMMISSION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION (CEC)

Created under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation to carry out regional cooperation programs to help Canada, Mexico and the United States move to more sustainable forms of development.

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FOREWORD

FOREWORD

Exploring the relationship between trade and environmental protection has never been more important than now, with the end of the millennium quickly approaching. Continued trends toward globalization and trade liberalization are bringing new and boosted development to many countries, often at a high cost to the environment and natural resources.

It is clear that finding ways to make economic development compatible with environmental protection—that is, achieving sustainable development—will be key to relations between countries in the coming years. The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro was an important step in securing worldwide commitments to this idea. However, five years after Rio, principal economic decisions in both industrialized and developing countries are made without taking the environment into consideration. There is much work ahead.

Industrialized nations are placing a high priority on the relationship between trade and environmental protection. But this work cannot be done by them alone. Industrialized countries now acknowledge that the goal of reaching environmentally sustainable development on a global scale will only be reached by exploring alternative approaches to conservation and managing natural resources with developing countries.

Unfortunately many obstacles to global cooperation exist. Taking environmental considerations into account in commercial decisions has aroused suspicion in many developing countries, feeding the fear that this will open the door to a new form of commercial protectionism. There is also a growing tendency in the industrialized world to impose policies and environmental standards that do not correspond to the social reality in other countries. Finally, questions about who is responsible for global environmental problems and what are the most equitable solutions continue to bias attitudes in developing countries toward international efforts.

Regional Cooperation as a Model

In response to the global environmental struggle, North America is attempting to forge an innovative model for environmental cooperation amidst growing economic interdependence in the region. The North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States includes a means for directly linking commerce with goals for sustainable development. Parallel to NAFTA, the three countries in 1994 signed the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC). This agreement provides a framework for cooperation that unites countries differing not only in their levels of development, but also in their climatic and ecological conditions.



The international discussion on trade, environment and regional environmental cooperation are central to the agreements between Canada, Mexico and the United States—especially in the years following Rio. It is our hope that the North American experiences will be of interest to other countries and regions that are moving toward integration with the world economy through freer trade agreements.

In North America we have identified two fundamental pillars of effective environmental cooperation between nations: respect for each nation's sovereignty in establishing priorities, policies and legal frameworks that suit the needs of each country; and the importance of coordinated efforts in resolving shared environmental problems.

The environmental agreement between the three nations is designed to make trade and environmental protection complimentary. The commitments of Canada, Mexico and the United States to enforce their sovereign laws, maintain high levels of environmental protection, allow full access to environmental information and encourage public participation are the basis for ensuring that trade and environment work together toward achieving sustainability in North America. In creating the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, the three countries have created a forum for regional dialogue to exchange information and better understand national and regional environmental problems.

In this publication we have tried to explain, in a straightforward way, how the three countries of North America are facing the challenge of regional environmental problems in the context of free trade. An open dialogue between governments and citizens of the three countries is the key to confronting transboundary and regional problems successfully. The greatest benefit of seeking consensus is that it helps to prevent environmental and trade conflicts before they arise.

I firmly believe that the model North America has created, and indeed is continuing to develop, will be of interest to those in North America and in other countries who are interested in working with their neighbors and trade partners to preserve our environmental heritage while constructing a better future.



VICTOR LICHTINGER

** Before becoming Executive Director of the CEC's Secretariat, Victor Lichtinger, a Mexican economist, had been General Director of ICF Kaiser/Mexico, a consulting company specializing in the environment, and General Coordinator for natural resources and environment in the Mexican Foreign Affairs Secretariat, where he coordinated the Mexican delegation at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.*

In North America we have identified two fundamental pillars of effective environmental cooperation between nations: respect for each nation's sovereignty in establishing priorities, policies and legal frameworks that suit the needs of each country; and the importance of coordinated efforts in resolving shared environmental problems.

A VISION FOR A HEALTHY NORTH AMERICA: MESSAGES FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTERS



SERGIO MARCHI

became Canada's Minister of the Environment in January 1996. Marchi has been a Member of Parliament for the riding of York since 1984. As an M.P., Marchi was appointed Immigration, Multiculturalism, Transport and Labor Critic. Following the general elections of 1993, Marchi was appointed Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. He is also a member of the Interdepartmental Committee on Economic Development.

More than 70 percent of the pollutants entering the Great Lakes basin come from outside Canada. So do the six tonnes of PCBs that fall on the Canadian Arctic each year. Governments the world over are increasingly aware that environments, like economies, share a deep interconnectedness that transcends national borders. This interconnectedness supports the need for increased international cooperation on both fronts.

As the process of world trade liberalization continues, Canadians remain committed to environmental cooperation and sustainable development at home, and with our trading partners. The North America Free Trade Agreement and its side agreements are evidence that this is possible. The Commission for Environmental Cooperation is an expression of the commitment of Canada, Mexico and the United States to work together to ensure that the economic growth stimulated by the removal of trade barriers between our countries is not achieved at the expense of the environment. The CEC plays a critical role in achieving sustainable development in all of our countries.

Despite much progress on ecological and environmental issues, much more remains to be done, particularly in the face of the threats posed by issues such as climate change and the increasingly extreme weather conditions that we are all experiencing. We need to work proactively to increase our environmental cooperation and ensure effective enforcement of environment laws. We have to set the highest possible standards for environmental quality, and then we must live up to them. Through our mutual cooperation, we will not only foster wealth for our nations, but also help to create a cleaner world for future generations.



JULIA CARABIAS LILLO



became the Mexican Secretary of State for the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries in December of 1994. Prior to this, she was President of the National Institute of Ecology. Carabias completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees (1973-1981) in the Faculty of Sciences of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and is a widely published, tenured professor.

In Mexico, as elsewhere in the world, the concepts of sustainable development, conservation and rational use of natural resources have gained considerable ground in recent years. With the forging of NAFTA, and the creation of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, Mexico and its partners in the alliance expressed their common conviction that enhancing trade should not mean sacrificing the environment and, conversely, that the environment not be used as an excuse to establish unfair barriers to trade. To make sure this is the case, close collaboration is needed between the three countries. We believe the Commission is becoming the instrument to facilitate this interaction, helping to bring together national and regional goals, and that its mandate of confronting and solving shared regional problems supports our priorities.

When Mexico entered NAFTA, the process to revamp Mexico's environmental laws and regulations was already well under way. The new NAFTA relationship underscores Mexico's commitment to the reality that the environment does not stop at the border and that the relationship between trade and the environment is a positive one. We believe the Commission is making a significant contribution to the quality of the region's environment, and is helping to create a healthy commercial relationship among the NAFTA partners.



CAROL BROWNER

became the Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency in January 1993. Her mission is to promote public health by protecting the nation's air, water, and soil. Browner, who grew up in south Florida, was Secretary of the Department of Environmental Regulation for the State of Florida from 1991 to 1993. There she earned praise for building innovative partnerships to protect the environment while also promoting economic growth.

Increasingly complex environmental issues face the countries of North America. A number of these issues, such as transboundary air pollution and climate change, have a global dimension that presents further challenges.

The growing integration of our economies through trade requires all three countries to identify and employ new approaches to environmental protection. These approaches must be based on new partnerships with industries, citizen groups and local governments that enable us to address our highest-priority environmental problems in the most cost-effective manner. By sharing our experiences and working together, we can make "cleaner, cheaper, smarter" environmental protection a reality throughout North America.

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation offers us a unique opportunity to join forces in achieving our environmental agenda. Canada, Mexico and the United States share many goals for environmental protection—to protect our people's health, to sustain natural systems while achieving economic growth and to prevent pollution in ways that make economic and environmental sense. By working together through the CEC, we can help each other achieve those goals and make North America a model for the rest of the world.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the major challenges facing the North American region is finding how to harvest the economic benefits of freer trade without causing more environmental damage.

When Canada, Mexico and the United States signed the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993, they created the world's largest trading bloc. At the same time, they sought to build environmental safeguards into the trade liberalization pact and agreed to sign a side accord, the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation.

It is a unique arrangement, linking three very different countries: two industrialized countries with a rapidly developing nation. Each country maintains its sovereign right to utilize its resources and set its own environmental laws and standards. But the three countries have also agreed on collaborative projects to protect the regional environment for the common good.

The organization created to carry out that agreement is the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. The CEC sees itself both as an agency to assist the countries in avoiding negative environmental effects from trade, and as one that can help them evolve forms of development that are less environmentally damaging. It represents a new generation of international organizations, one that provides public information about environmental issues, and brings people from various sectors in the three countries together to seek solutions.

The role of the CEC is to assist the countries in advancing a North American agenda, with mutually-agreed upon priorities. In part, it does this by providing information and linkages among a wide variety of people. Through meetings of its Joint Public Advisory Committee and of a number of other groups, the CEC consults with the public on many issues and in many locations.

As an agency for public accountability, the CEC has responded to submissions from citizens and nongovernmental organizations in all three countries, and looked into allegations that environmental laws were not being effectively enforced. In its role as a public source of environmental information at the regional level, the Commission has published a wide range of reports. This year it will publish the first North American State of the Environment Report, showing trends in environmental, social and economic fields. The CEC will also publish the first North American Pollutant Release Inventory, showing on a continental scale the releases of harmful substances into the environment.

The Commission has used its role as a broker to foster a number of projects to improve the regional environment. These programs are developed around criteria that are becoming central to continent-wide cooperation: prevention, information and public participation, measuring environmental changes, accountability and equity. The Sound Management of Chemicals project has led to regional action plans to phase out remaining uses of two pesticides, chlordane and DDT, and the industrial chemical PCBs. In addition, a reduction strategy for mercury is being developed. The CEC is coordinating work to protect habitat vital for the survival of a number of North American migratory species, including songbirds and Monarch butterflies.

One of the CEC's important functions is to bring together experts from the three countries to share ideas and formulate strategies for dealing with issues that affect the continent. This has helped develop greater expertise in such fields as enforcement of environmental laws and pollution prevention techniques.

Three years after the signing of NAFTA, and five years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the three nations are working on approaches to making the goals of trade more compatible with environmental needs. The CEC plays an important role in helping the countries of North America achieve the twin goals of economic and environmental security.





PART I—ROOTS OF A NORTH AMERICAN APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENT, TRADE
AND DEVELOPMENT


PART I—ROOTS OF A NORTH AMERICAN APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENT, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

This century has been one of dramatic changes for North America, with first the United States and Canada, and now Mexico moving from agrarian to industrial societies. While the populations grow and the economies expand, most environmental trends have been downward. Air and water are generally more polluted, wilderness is shrinking, cropland is degraded and the protective ozone layer overhead is thinner. Many species face extinction as their habitat is converted to human uses. Synthetic chemicals, some clearly toxic, are widespread in the environment.

In the past few decades, there have been modest successes in turning around these environmental trends. Releases of some pollutants have been controlled, industrial discharges to air and water have been reduced, emissions control systems in motor vehicles have greatly improved the air in our cities, reforestation is increasing in a number of areas, and new parks are being created to preserve some remaining wilderness areas. The challenge now is to go beyond simply reacting to environmental problems caused by the way we live and do business. We need to move to forms of economic development and lifestyles that do not systematically undermine the environmental base that supports all human enterprises.

Part of the economic development in Canada, Mexico and the United States is linked to a steady increase in trade among the three countries. On 1 January 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) entered into force, creating the world's largest trading bloc, with more than 380 million inhabitants.

When NAFTA was being negotiated, there were concerns about differences in the way the three countries dealt with the environment. NAFTA critics said that some countries or regions within countries might use lower environmental standards to create pollution havens to attract investment. In response, the countries wrote into NAFTA a clause saying they, "...recognize that it is inappropriate to encourage investment by relaxing domestic health, safety or environmental measures." The NAFTA partners were so committed to trade policies which do not come at the expense of the environment that they agreed in the preamble of NAFTA to "...promote sustainable development." This kind of language marked an international breakthrough in bringing environmental considerations into a trade agreement.



In addition to writing some environmental provisions into NAFTA, the three North American countries negotiated a side accord, the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC). This agreement recognizes that the countries share a common regional environment, including air, oceans, lakes and rivers, mountains and forests. NAAEC has a number of goals, including helping the NAFTA partners to prevent potential trade and environmental conflicts, promoting the effective enforcement of environmental laws in the three countries, and providing a way for the three countries to pursue common environmental aims.

It is a unique agreement in that it creates an environmental partnership, born of a trade accord, among one developing and two highly industrialized countries which respect each other's differences. NAAEC states that the countries have a sovereign right to utilize their own resources and set their own environment and development policies, but they have a responsibility to ensure that activities on their territories do not cause environmental damage beyond their borders. The agreement makes it easier for them to collaborate across national boundaries on issues of common concern, while maintaining their own, distinct national policies, regulations and standards. Continental-scale environmental issues that each country has faced individually can now be addressed from a North American perspective. Regional environmental cooperation complements national programs on continental issues such as the long-range transport of chemicals and protection of migratory species.

To carry out the provisions of the NAAEC, the three countries created the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) in early 1994. It is composed of a council of three cabinet members—one from each country, a Joint Public Advisory Committee with five members from each country, and a secretariat, based in Montreal. The CEC's mission is:

to facilitate cooperation and public participation to foster conservation, protection and enhancement of the North American environment for the benefit of present and future generations, in the context of increasing economic, trade and social links between Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Among its major tasks:

- Design and test ways of monitoring the impact of trade on the environment.
- Assist the three countries in cooperating to solve shared environmental problems.
- Promote forms of economic development with lower environmental impacts.
- Support the NAFTA countries in their efforts to avoid environment-related trade disputes.
- Encourage improvements in the environmental laws of the NAFTA countries and effective enforcement of environmental laws and regulations.
- Improve public access to environmental information, and encourage public participation in environmental decision-making in each country.
- Help the NAFTA countries to achieve environmentally sustainable trade practices.

The CEC provides a trinational forum for open dialogue on pressing environmental issues. Vital to each of its many programs is the participation of a broad range of interested persons from governments, business organizations, citizen groups, and scientific and professional organizations.

NORTH AMERICA IN THE WORLD PICTURE: THE ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES

When seen from space, North America appears as a series of ecosystems—including forests, plains, deserts, mountains, lakes, rivers, tundra and wetlands. If you look carefully at enlarged satellite photos, you can see the large cities, the circles in fields caused by center pivot irrigation systems and the eroded sediments draining from rivers into coastal areas. But perhaps the most striking observation from such a vantage point is the extent to which national boundaries are rendered invisible, overlapped by these ecosystems and geographic features. This distant perspective has now begun to be reflected in the great changes in attitudes of recent years, as Canada, Mexico and the United States have lowered trade barriers and begun to see themselves as an economic unit, as well as a complex and interdependent set of ecoregions.

NORTH AMERICA AT A GLANCE

	North America	% of World
Population (millions)	380	7
Urbanization (%)	76	45 (World average)
Land area (million km ²)	20	15.3
Forests (million km ²)	7.6	18
Gross Domestic Product (billions of US dollars)	7,290.3	30
Global Merchandise Trade Exports + Imports (billions of US dollars)	1,664.4	20

As a region, North America—Canada, Mexico and the United States—occupies a large land mass, well endowed by nature and carrying considerable influence in the world economy and in world trade.

Source: State of the Environment (SOE) Project, CEC, 1997.

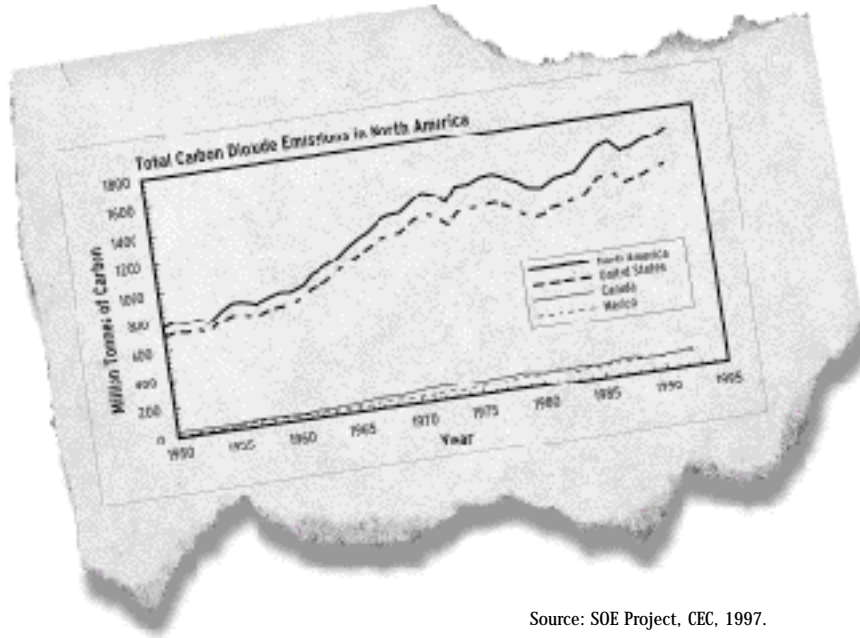
The North American Environment

The region is divided into distinct natural regions, some of which extend across national borders. These ecoregions range from Arctic tundra to mountain cordillera to tropical forests. Contained in these ecoregions is our long-term natural wealth or capital in such forms as fertile land, wood, fresh water, minerals and thousands of species of plants and animals. Despite the many natural riches, parts of the subcontinent suffer from scarcities, due to over-exploitation. Semi-desert areas, particularly in southwestern parts of the United States and northern parts of Mexico, face long-term water shortages, made critical by periodic droughts. Other examples of resource depletion are shortages of wood, which affect parts of all three countries, and the decline of a number of fisheries, such as the northern cod in the Atlantic and certain species of salmon off the Pacific coast.

ECOLOGICAL REGIONS OF NORTH AMERICA



ENVIRONMENT



Source: SOE Project, CEC, 1997.

High consumption patterns in North America have resulted in the North American region being one of the world's major sources of many forms of pollution. A number of the pollutants, including smog, acidic gases and toxic chemicals move across borders in ambient air or water. Air pollution is a health hazard to residents of a number of cities in all three countries, particularly Mexico City, the world's fourth largest city, and Los Angeles, the sixth largest. In all three countries, controls on industries and motor vehicles have limited or reduced some forms of air pollution, including the acidic sulfur gases that form acid rain.

Although North America has only about 7 percent of the world's population, the region's releases of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from energy and industrial sources represent about 30 percent of the world total. The region's emissions of CO₂, the principal greenhouse gas, are still rising, because most of the energy consumption comes from burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas. Given the important trade in energy and the widespread transportation of goods, it becomes clear that CO₂ reduction strategies must be transboundary in nature.

Forests still cover more than one-third of the continent, but this is a major reduction since the days before European settlement. There have been decreases in forested area of nearly 60 percent in Mexico and nearly 30 percent in the United States. Much of the original prairie on the continent has been converted to farmland or pasture.

The region is rich in biological diversity, but many species are at risk. Several varieties of North American songbirds are vanishing from traditional ranges, and are bordering on extinction. Wintering sites of the Monarch butterfly face pressure from logging, while milkweed, its food source, is being killed by herbicides.

A number of the rich marine ecosystems that lie off North America's coasts are being changed both by the physical development of coastal regions, and by pollution draining into the seas from sources on land. Sewage, pesticides and industrial effluents have already contributed to the closure of fisheries and the decline of valuable reefs.

NORTH AMERICAN BIODIVERSITY (SPECIES)

	Mammals	Birds	Higher plants	Amphibians	Reptiles	Total
Canada	193	578	2,920	41	41	3,773
Mexico	450	1,026	25,000	285	687	27,448
United States	428	768	16,302	233	280	18,011

These figures represent the number of recorded species. At a global level, the United Nations Environment Program's Global Biodiversity Assessment estimates there are about 14 million species of life, of which some 1.7 million have been scientifically described. Source: World Resources, 1996-97.

Preserving biodiversity is increasingly a shared responsibility, since millions of birds and butterflies, as well as a number of mammals, aquatic creatures and the seeds of plants move freely across the borders.

The long-term release of toxic substances into the environment has caused serious health problems for a number of species, some of which were poisoned out of whole areas. Toxic chemicals have also accumulated in the food chain, particularly affecting people whose sustenance derives principally from wildlife, including native peoples in regions such as the Arctic and the Great Lakes.

THREATENED SPECIES, 1996

	Mammals	Birds	Reptiles	Amphibians	Fishes	Invertebrates	Totals	% of World
Canada	7	5	3	1	13	11	40	0.8
Mexico	64	36	18	3	86	40	247	4.7
United States	35	50	28	24	123	594	287	5.5
World	1,096	1,107	253	124	734	1,891	5,205	

Source: IUCN 1996, Red List of Threatened Animals.

Note: There are three categories of threat: Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable.

THE NORTH AMERICAN ECONOMY

THE NORTH AMERICAN ECONOMY

While government and business leaders try to grapple with environmental issues, economic growth is steadily increasing, and the increase in trade has been impressive. The World Trade Organization lists 76 free trade areas or customs unions set up or modified since 1948, with more than half of them created in the 1990s. Several are in the Americas. Although the flow of public funds in the form of development assistance from developed to developing countries has fallen short of the expectations raised at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, the flow of private capital and international trade is booming. This has been assisted by global trade talks in which countries have promised to cut tariffs on manufactured goods and liberalize trade in agriculture and services.

The North American region carries considerable weight in the global economy, accounting for nearly one-third of the world's economic output, and 20 percent of international mercantile goods. However, there are considerable differences in the distribution of employment, and the structures of national economies among the NAFTA countries. For example, Mexico and Canada still have higher numbers of people working in such primary sectors as agriculture, mining and forestry.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ECONOMY

Economic Sector	Canada		Mexico		United States	
	% of Gross Domestic Product 1993	% of Labor Force 1994	% of Gross Domestic Product 1994	% of Labor Force 1990	% of Gross Domestic Product 1992	% of Labor Force 1994
Primary	7.3	5.4	10.8	22.7	3.3	3.3
Secondary	26.4	19.8	28	27.8	21.3	22.5
Tertiary	66.3	74.8	61.2	46.1	75.4	74.2

Note: Figures are adjusted to exclude the officially unemployed labor force. Primary: agriculture, forestry and mining. Secondary: manufacturing and construction. Tertiary: public utilities, transportation and communications, trade, finance, public finance, public administration and defense, and services. Employment unspecified by sector for Mexico was 3.4 percent of total active employment in 1990. Source: SOE Project, CEC, 1997.

There has been significant increase in the movement of merchandise, and in the total amount of foreign direct investment in the region in recent years. Canada and the United States have had long-standing trade liberalization agreements in specific sectors, such as the 1965 Autopact on trade in motor vehicles. In 1985, Canada and the United States began talking about a bilateral Free Trade Agreement, and it was signed in 1989. Shortly thereafter, talks began on NAFTA. Since that period, trade in the region has risen steadily. Merchandise shipments among the three countries grew by more than 91 percent in the 1990-95 period that included the signing of NAFTA. The value of such shipments now exceeds US \$1 billion a day.

Since 1989, a serious recession and decisions by governments to reduce deficit financing have led to major layoffs in once-stable employment sectors of big government and big business. Many of those laid off started their own enterprises, or found jobs in smaller businesses, but a number of these new jobs are at lower pay rates. Despite relatively high unemployment, North American macro-economic trends are considered generally healthy, in spite of cyclical differences in the three countries.

INTRA-NORTH AMERICAN FLOW OF MERCANTILE GOODS AND SERVICES

(Billions of US dollars)

	1990	1993	1994	1995
Canada to United States*	78	111	129	155
United States to Canada*	65	100	114	111
Mexico to United States*	27	40	50	59
United States to Mexico*	24	41	51	45
Canada to Mexico	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.8
Mexico to Canada	1.2	2.9	3.3	3.9
TOTALS	195.6	295.5	348.1	374.7

* Figures rounded to the nearest billion.
Source: SOE Project, CEC, 1997.

SOCIAL TRENDS

Social Trends

During the period of high economic growth since the Second World War, the peoples of the North American region have seen infant mortality decline, life expectancy improve, and they generally have better nutrition, and higher levels of education and literacy. Despite these encouraging trends, poverty appears to be on the increase in North America. Although social expenditures have risen since the Second World War, there is a recent tendency by governments to trim or eliminate many programs, including those aimed at reducing poverty and social inequality. Examples of these include unemployment benefits, health services, public education and housing.

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There are clear differences in income distribution among the three countries. The ratio of average income for those in the top 20 percent of income earners compared to those in the bottom 20 percent, is 24 to 1 in Mexico, almost 12 to 1 in the United States, and 6 to 1 in Canada. The gap between the wealthiest and the poorest is continuing to widen, and this appears to be part of a global trend.

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CREATING A PATHWAY

Changing Approaches in Tight Fiscal Times

Governments are under growing pressure to improve their environmental performance at home, and live up to a growing number of international commitments. The public continues to press governments for more environmental protection, but their financial ability to respond is shrinking.

Spending cuts affect the ability of most governments to develop and enforce environmental policies and projects, carry out research and support independent institutions that depend on grants. For a number of reasons, central governments are handing over more environmental responsibilities to states, provinces and local authorities and their commitment to environmental quality is mixed. Some of these lower-tier governments are better equipped to handle new responsibilities than others—for example, in funding, staffing, monitoring and enforcement.

Governments have traditionally dealt with environment and natural resource problems by passing laws and regulations, but in recent years, they have dedicated less money to the enforcement of environmental regulations. Politicians are also under pressure from some sectors in business to reduce or simplify the regulatory burden. For these and other reasons, governments are looking at alternative ways of achieving environmental goals, including voluntary pollution prevention and the use of market forces, such as tradable pollution permits.

TO SUSTAINABILITY

CREATING A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABILITY

Over many years, a growing number of people have recognized the need for development strategies that provide jobs and generate wealth but reduce environmental impacts. This is often described as sustainable development, a term popularized by the UN-sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development in its 1987 report, *Our Common Future*. The Commission said sustainable development has to meet people's needs and legitimate desires, but the economic growth must stay within the planet's ecological limits. It must not leave future generations with a degraded environment.

Sustainable development was the central focus of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. This Earth Summit brought together the heads or senior officials of 179 governments to endorse a broad range of actions to protect the environment, including Agenda 21, a blueprint for sustainable business and government policies, and personal choices. It took place at the same time that NAFTA was being negotiated.

In the years since Rio, there has been a steady increase in economic development, particularly in some developing nations, and there has been more international economic integration and regional trading agreements. Governments would like to move toward more sustainable forms of development, but most find it difficult to build major environmental goals into their economic development plans.

One of the important functions of the CEC is to help people understand ways of making the evolutionary shift from forms of trade and development that fail to look at the environmental consequences, to economic activities that are designed to avoid creating environmental problems.

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11—The role of the Commission

North America more sustainable

A critical task of the CEC is to encourage joint action by the three countries and a common approach to help

prevent the development of environmental

problems. The organization

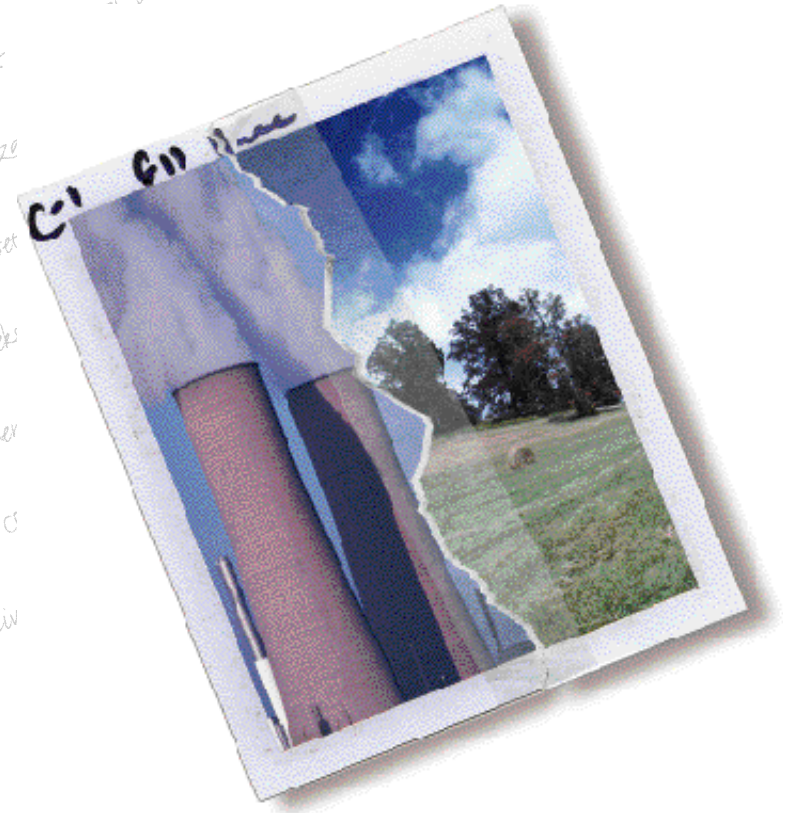
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PART II—THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSION IN MAKING NORTH AMERICA MORE SUSTAINABLE

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A critical task of the CEC is to encourage joint action by the three countries and a common approach to help prevent the development of regional environmental problems. The organization uses consensus-building to resolve conflicts between environmental and economic goals, and seeks ways of achieving improvements to our environment through economically beneficial means. The CEC frequently brings together experts from diverse fields to create strong trilateral teams that work to bring about agreements on difficult issues.

On a broader scale, the CEC has an important role to play in promoting policies in all three North American societies that will lead to more sustainable approaches to economic activity. This requires an evolution in people's values, patterns of behavior, cooperation and participation in decision-making. It involves developing and sharing ecologically benign technologies, using resources in a more material- and energy-efficient manner, and having a production system that recognizes the importance of preserving our ecological systems.

One of the first roles given to the CEC was that of sentinel, keeping a lookout over the state of the continental environment and providing warnings of danger points ahead. The organization has the mandate to investigate environmental issues and to act as a forum for submissions filed by governments or citizens.

Working together, the three countries of North America are avoiding duplication of effort by pooling increasingly scarce resources. The CEC does not substitute for national or binational efforts. Regional cooperation is much broader in scope, and involves the full participation of all three countries working towards a common goal. In fact, regional cooperation ties in with global efforts because it complements work that is already being done at an international level.

PREVENTION

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For many years, environmental experts and a growing number of business and government officials have pointed out that attempting to cure environmental problems by reacting to them after the fact is more costly than anticipating and preventing them. This is one of the major themes of Agenda 21 from the Rio conference on sustainable development. The programs of the CEC embody this principle of helping the three countries anticipate and prevent negative effects of development and trade and shared environmental problems.

NAFTA'S

NAFTA's Environmental Effects

During the negotiations leading to NAFTA, there was a wide range of claims and counter-claims about its potential effect on the environment. Some critics feared that environmental standards would tumble to the level of the weakest jurisdiction, and that industries would move to areas where there were fewer pollution controls and limits on exploiting resources. Other people said that the economic activity created by trade liberalization would generate funds for environmental programs, including enforcement of environmental laws. They also said that there would be pressure for improved environmental performance across the continent, and that this would increase the market for environmental technologies and techniques.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

To understand better how increased trade affects the North American environment, the CEC has launched the NAFTA Environmental Effects Project. Its research involves both supporters and critics of the free trade pact. The project is tracing some of the trade and investment effects—both positive and negative—on the environment. Two key areas being monitored are energy and agriculture.

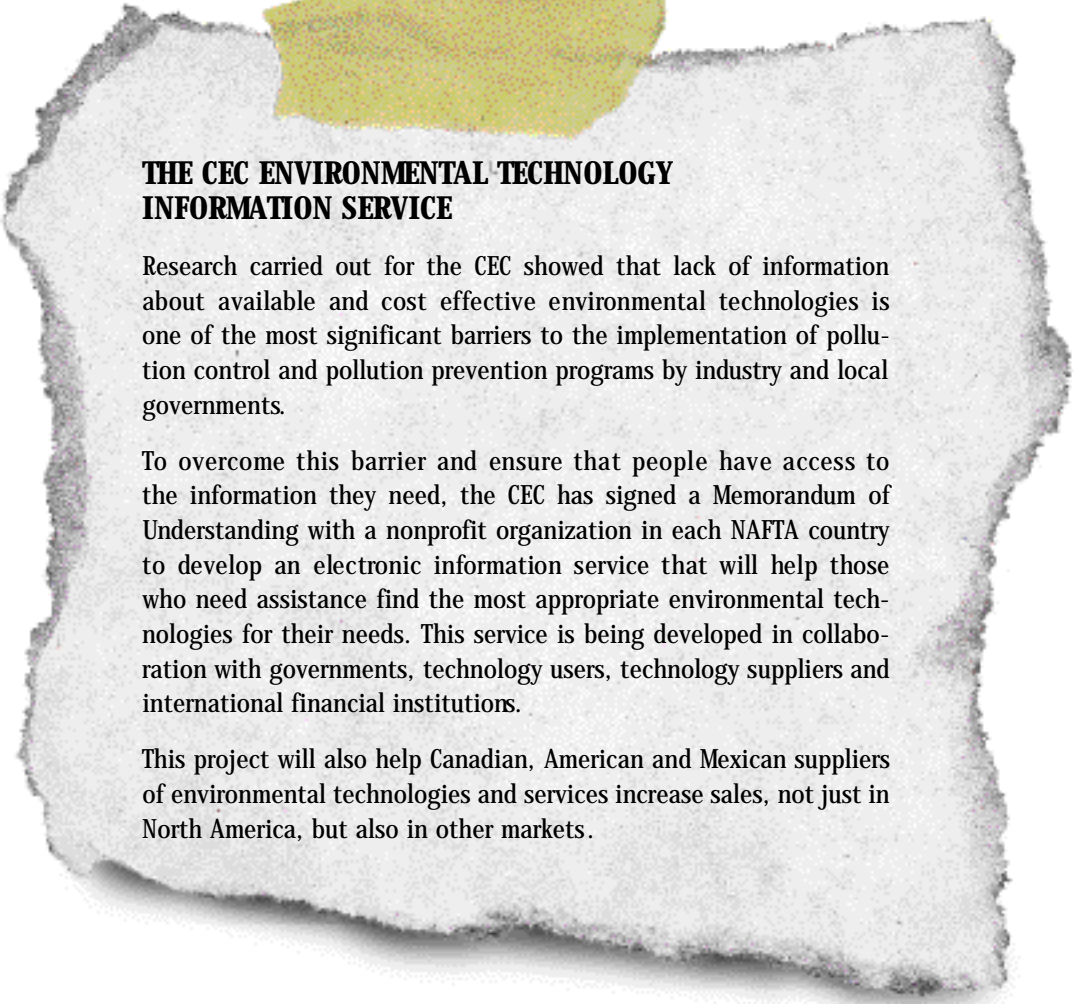
Because the impacts of freer trade are taking place over time, and some of these business decisions would have taken place with or without NAFTA, it is difficult to define precisely the environmental impacts of the accord. But when the first analyses of the NAFTA environmental impacts are finally available, the Commission will be in a position to recommend ways that the countries can maximize the beneficial effects of free trade, and minimize the negative ones. Ultimately, such analysis will help the NAFTA partners avoid disputes before they arise, especially as they relate to the environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL
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ON SERVICE

Research carried out for the CEC showed that lack of information about available and cost effective environmental technologies is one of the most significant barriers to the implementation of pollution control and pollution prevention programs by industry and local governments.

To overcome this barrier and ensure that people have access to the information they need, the CEC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a nonprofit organization in each NAFTA country to develop an electronic information service that will help those who need assistance find the most appropriate environmental technologies for their needs. This service is being developed in collaboration with governments, technology users, technology suppliers and international financial institutions.

This project will also help Canadian, American and Mexican suppliers of environmental technologies and services increase sales, not just in North America, but also in other markets.



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ENGAGING THE NORTH AMERICAN PUBLIC

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During 1996, the CEC's Joint Public Advisory Committee held regional meetings to hear from North Americans about four environmental priority issues:

- Reducing Human Health Risks from Environmental Contaminants.
- Conserving Biodiversity.
- Strengthening Environment and Economy Linkages.
- Defining Public Participation.

People at the meetings suggested the CEC both inform and involve the public in the formative stages of projects, whether they be CEC programs, government policy-making or proposed business developments.

This year, there are three priority issues for the regional public meetings:

- Long-Range Transport of Air Pollutants in North America.
- Voluntary Compliance with Environmental Laws in North America.
- Environmental Networking between North American Communities.

Consultation can be meaningless unless those participating have access to accurate and timely information. To reach as many citizens of the North American region as possible, the CEC established a public resource center in Montreal. It also maintains a "virtual" resource center in English, French and Spanish on its home page on the Internet's World Wide Web. This set of electronic files contains a wide array of information, including current CEC publications and summaries of the environmental laws in the three countries.

CEC-provided funds enabled the creation of the North American Center for Environmental Information and Communication, known as CICEANA. Based in Mexico City, this independent nongovernmental organization provides the public a window on the world of North American environmental information by linking a wide variety of sources. The center also has the role of encouraging the production, broadcast and publication of environmental programs, connecting the mass media with sources of information, and supporting environmental education programs for sustainable development.

Summaries of Environmental Laws in North America

The most widely-used tool created by the CEC is the environmental law database on the CEC website. This database makes available summaries of Canadian, Mexican and US federal environmental laws. Nowhere else exist such accurate summaries of federal environmental legislation in the three countries, along with carefully selected state and provincial legislation. The database, available in English, French and Spanish, is updated on a regular basis. Making information like this available is central to the work of the CEC, and essential for promoting an informed public in North America.

MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Measuring change is fundamental to understanding the success of any policies. Economic reports are a staple of the daily news. An increasing number of reports on environmental change and environmental performance have been produced by a number of international organizations, national, provincial, state and local governments and private companies.

The CEC's North American State of the Environment Report

The CEC's State of the Environment Report seeks to support sustainable development decision-making by analyzing the interactions between economic, social, and institutional changes in North America and the environment. This report fills a gap in environmental reporting at the regional level, building upon existing national, state and provincial reports. Rather than providing an *ex post facto* understanding of processes, the analysis will emphasize current processes and how they interact and link with one another. The report does not seek to provide a comprehensive analysis of all documented trends, but rather focuses on the most important or significant ones. The State of the Environment Report is composed of four main sections, preceded by an introduction and followed by a summary and conclusion. The first three sections lay the foundation for an analytical discussion of the state of the North American environment. The first section characterizes it. This is followed by the baseline environmental reference, and the presentation of current trends in economic, social, and institutional arenas. The fourth section analyzes how these trends interact with the environment and influence the baseline environmental reference.

The North American Pollutant Release Inventory Project

Pollutant release inventories are now operating or in the pilot stage in the three countries. Over time, they show trends in the discharge of harmful substances to the environment from thousands of industries, as well as waste shipments from industries to treatment and disposal centers. Using public information from the three national programs, the CEC is preparing a series of annual reports that will help people see trends in releases and shipments of waste on a continental basis. The first report, in press, will show what pollutants are being released in the greatest quantities, where they are being released, and how they are entering the environment.

North American Integrated Information System

It is increasingly evident that sound judgment on sustainable development is dependent on a better understanding of the interdependence of environment, economic, social and institutional factors. The CEC has developed the North American Integrated Information System, a graphic tool to help the public consider, from a regional perspective, the environmental dimensions of selected physical, socioeconomic and ecological variables.

The North American Integrated Information System produces maps and allows the user to overlay data that combine physical features, such as land and water, with other ecological elements, such as forests and wildlife, along with information on economic and social issues. The CEC will make this tool available to the public on the Internet.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENFORCEMENT

Citizen Submissions

The North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation states that each country, "...shall ensure that its laws and regulations provide for high levels of environmental protection and shall strive to continue to improve those laws and regulations." It also states that each country, "...shall effectively enforce its environmental laws and regulations...."

The CEC plays important roles both in reporting on how NAFTA governments are living up to their environmental commitments, and in helping governments improve environmental enforcement. The public has an opportunity to be part of this effort. For example, any citizen or non-governmental organization has the right to complain that a government is failing to enforce its environmental laws effectively. This mechanism offers the public another alternative to the options already existing for demanding responsive government and bringing local environmental issues to the attention of a continent-wide audience.

AMONG THE CITIZEN SUBMISSIONS THAT THE CEC IS EXAMINING

AMONG THE CITIZEN SUBMISSIONS THAT THE CEC IS EXAMINING:

- A number of Mexican environmental groups filed a submission alleging that their federal government did not conduct a proper environmental assessment before the construction of a 500-meter-long pier for a cruise ship terminal at the resort island of Cozumel, off the Yucatan peninsula.
- A US environmental group and a private citizen filed a submission alleging that the US Government was not enforcing environmental regulations in the operation of the army base at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. The claim is that planned expansion of the base will overtax local water resources and degrade the ecosystem that depends on the water.
- A Canadian nongovernmental organization has filed a submission alleging that their federal government is failing to enforce effectively the provisions of fisheries and environmental laws. The claim is that the government is not applying habitat protection regulations evenly, and has turned over some of its responsibilities to provinces.

Member Nation Enforcement Efforts

To help the three countries improve their own environmental enforcement, the CEC initiated the formation of the North American Working Group on Environmental Enforcement and Compliance Cooperation, composed of senior federal, state and provincial environmental officials from the three countries. For the first time, it is bringing together people from different government departments, including environmental, customs and justice departments. They are able to share information on enforcement strategies, as well as expertise and technical knowledge. The exchanges of information have increased the ability to track illegal transborder movements of hazardous substances and wastes, to enforce anti-smuggling laws against the trade in endangered wildlife, and limit the movements of harmful chemicals, such as ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons. Such regional cooperation involves not only domestic environmental laws, but the application of United Nations environmental conventions.

Since each NAFTA nation has its own set of environmental laws, protection of the North American environment relies on close collaboration. The CEC assists all three countries with the development of environmental law and formulating alternative approaches to achieving environmental compliance. The Commission supports the governments in the preparation of public annual enforcement reports and in developing improved measures of effective enforcement and compliance.

EQUITY

Equity is a key element of sustainable development. People have a right to an equitable share of benefits from the common environment, just as they deserve not to suffer from such effects of environmental degradation as pollution. Likewise, future generations have a right to inherit an environment that has not been degraded. All NAFTA countries recognize the principle of equity, and much of the CEC's work is designed to help ensure that current policies and activities respect this.

For example, the goal of the Sound Management of Chemicals project is to encourage region-wide reductions in the release of persistent toxic substances. North American cooperation on greenhouse gas emissions trading might open new avenues for the three nations to reduce emissions of pollutants that can change the climate. Through its Environmental Conservation Program, the CEC is working with North American governments to ensure that biodiversity is safeguarded and that species are protected for the sustenance, pleasure, and ecosystem support they can provide to future generations.

Sound Management of Chemicals

A number of chemicals produced or used in North America are acutely toxic, or can build up to unacceptable levels in the food chain. Experience has shown that some pollutants travel thousands of kilometers through the air, and are carried long distances in rivers and ocean currents. They enter food systems far away from their points of origin. As a result, it is impossible for any one country acting unilaterally to stop pollution from arriving on its territory. In 1995, the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States agreed to develop action plans for the sound management of a number of toxic substances on a continental basis.

So far, these action plans cover reductions in the use and dispersal of two industrial chemicals, PCBs and mercury, and the phase-out of remaining uses of two insecticides, chlordane and DDT. The PCB regional action plan aims to eliminate the use of this chemical, still found in old electrical equipment, by 2008. It is planned that the use of DDT and chlordane could be phased out over a decade, and replaced with less environmentally harmful controls on such insects as mosquitoes and termites. A task force is working on a reduction strategy for mercury, which comes from a wide variety of sources and is harder to control.

Although the regional chemical action plans apply to North America, they could serve as models for other countries in the Americas and other parts of the world where these chemicals are still used. These are among the chemicals on the United Nations Environment Program's priority list for controls.

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Species Protection and Habitat Protection

Every year, millions of birds, ranging from geese to tiny warblers, follow long-established flyways between Canada, Mexico and the United States. Due to the loss or decline in quality of habitat, many of these migratory species are at risk. The CEC is coordinating a partnership of key organizations to protect vital habitat, including resting, feeding, breeding and nesting grounds along principal North American migratory routes. The Important Bird Areas project is being carried out in cooperation with governments and a number of major nature groups, including the National Audubon Society, Mexico's *Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad* (National Commission for the Awareness and Use of Biodiversity) and the Canadian Nature Federation. The long-term goal is a North American Regional Strategy for the Conservation of North American Birds that will coordinate national efforts. Since birds and other wildlife require a connected network of sites with suitable habitat, this project has implications for the conservation of wild areas, including forests and wetlands.



THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY

No species symbolizes the ecological links among the NAFTA countries better than this butterfly. Each year, millions of the orange and black Monarchs migrate across the continent, and their survival depends on the protection of habitat in all three nations for feeding, breeding and winter hibernation.

During their annual CEC meeting in 1996, the three environment ministers announced a Monarch Butterfly Conservation Program. It includes the mapping and monitoring of habitat for the migratory Monarchs, the creation of more protected areas and development of eco-tourism projects that promote private sector involvement in the protection of the butterflies.

CAPACITY BUILDING

A society's ability to develop more sustainably depends on the capacity of its people and institutions to make environmentally friendly development choices. The CEC has identified capacity building as a crucial factor in the implementation of sustainable development on the continent.

The NAFTA partners have created a project to raise skills in environmental technologies and management, especially in Mexico. This includes environmental resources training and certification, environmental management at the state level, pollution prevention in small and medium-size enterprises, and sound management of chemicals.

A new survey conducted as part of the CEC's Environmental Education and Training project found that many Mexican companies are looking to specific environmental training and education programs to help them achieve those goals. The survey—which received over 500 responses from a cross-section of industries and company sizes—represents perhaps the most comprehensive effort so far to gauge the demand for this type of education and training in Mexico.

EMERGING ISSUES

The population of North America and the economies of the three NAFTA countries will continue to grow. Unless future developments are planned more carefully, they will place increasing pressures on the environment. Two obvious areas of potential problems are the pollution of increasingly scarce water resources and transboundary air pollution.

Water scarcity is a reality in parts of all three countries and parts of the region, particularly the central plains, the south and southwestern parts of the United States, and northern Mexico, suffer periodic droughts. For a century, there have been periodic conflicts over access to scarce water resources, both within all three countries and along the two international borders. As a result, the countries have, in past years, signed a number of bilateral agreements covering water allocation and water quality protection.

However, pressures on water rights continue to rise. Growth in population and economic demand have been high both in the "Sun Belt" region of the southwestern United States and in northern Mexico. At the same time, there have been growing demands to maintain enough water in local rivers to protect aquatic ecosystems. The problem of water scarcity continues to increase, made worse by some inefficient uses of water and by periodic droughts. In recent years, water shortages in northern Mexico have killed crops and cattle, while aquatic life has suffered from the reduced amount of water in rivers. Unless water shortages are averted they could have implications for national security and migration patterns, and these could strain the good relations among the three countries.

In 1997, a status report on transboundary water issues will be released by the CEC. It will show how water uses have changed in recent decades as industrial and residential development competes for water that has traditionally gone to agricultural irrigation. It will also show how water conservation can help reduce waste, thus reducing the risk of water shortages and the constraints these place on development.

Energy use, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, is a major contributor to air pollution, including the release of greenhouse gases that are predicted to change the global climate. A United Nations expert panel has said that unless the emissions of gases such as carbon dioxide are controlled, global warming could result that will have widespread effects, including changes in the distribution of rainfall. One CEC project is looking at the effects of climate variability on North America's shared water resources.

Continental Pollutant Pathways

In recent years, scientists have learned that certain types of air pollutants can travel long distances through the atmosphere before settling in a completely different area or even a different country. This phenomenon is known as the long-range transport of air pollutants.

Cases of this phenomenon abound. Take the Great Lakes region, for example. There, since the 1970s, scientists have been tracking concentrations of the insecticide DDT and other toxic chemicals such as PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in the lakes and particularly in the fish, birds and mammals that depend on their waters. Concentration levels remain high, even though these chemicals are no longer produced or used locally. Many of the pollutants have been carried to the Great Lakes Basin by air currents from areas as far away as the southern United States and beyond.

In 1997, the CEC will issue a special report on these "Continental Pollutant Pathways." The report seeks to identify the scope of the problem while promoting regional cooperation to help address the issue of airborne toxic chemicals in the Great Lakes region, the Arctic and other key ecosystems in North America.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The Commission provides monetary assistance to nongovernmental organizations working towards similar goals, especially through the North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation. It provides grants to community-based environmental initiatives that show promise of providing leadership and setting a good example in environmental behavior. The grants are mostly intended for small, grassroots community organizations that desire to network and share information across borders with other groups pursuing similar projects and goals.

Most of the projects combine specific objectives, such as environmental protection, community income generation, capacity-strengthening and research towards the general goal of sustainable development. Projects funded in the first granting year included a program to develop non-wood forest products in Oaxaca, Mexico, a binational educational workshop for a water-quality monitoring program along the United States-Mexico border, and a program aimed at advancing environmental quality and sustainability in Hamilton, Canada, and Monterrey, Mexico.

Public participation is key to cooperation

At the heart of sustainable development is the local community. It is at the local level that crucial decisions related to sustainable development are made and environmental protection affects whatever the social status. Environmental protection requires the access to information about their environment, potential hazards and community

It is also of importance that laws provide clear opportunities for participation. Public participation is the basis of a number of approaches

policy formulation, whether the country is industrialized or developing, and is independent of the specific climatic

sustainability



Part II

PART III—THE NORTH AMERICAN ROAD TO SUSTAINABILITY

Five years since Rio, it is clear that we still have a lot to do in North America to bring us closer to the goal of achieving sustainable development. Creating opportunities and more equitable growth is, in itself, a challenging task for the new millennium. But the even bigger challenge will be to make sure that economic growth does not degrade our natural endowment, this continent's rich and varied environment. Such degradation would seriously affect the natural resource and environmental inheritance of future generations. We in the present generation have to face the challenge of achieving sustainable development at all levels, local, state or provincial, national, regional and global.

Alongside the local communities and governments, regional organizations—such as the CEC—play a critical role. They link national efforts and, in doing so, ensure that resources are combined in an efficient way to solve common problems. This effort is especially important in light of the recent trend towards integrated regional economies and the increased willingness to share responsibility for important natural resources and ecosystems.

The wide public debate during the NAFTA negotiations increased awareness of environmental problems in North America and triggered a number of political actions to deal with them, both within and among the member countries. It would be inappropriate, however, to suggest that the NAFTA region is ahead of others in its implementation of sustainable development. Like the rest of the world, the NAFTA countries are still learning how to integrate economic, social, and environmental objectives. The learning is not easy and requires a willingness to try new approaches which promise ecological, economic, social, and institutional improvement.

The initial positive signs of working together in North America are only a modest beginning. However, from this short-lived experience we can identify a few insights worth sharing with other integrated regions in the world.

Public Participation is Key to Cooperation

At the heart of sustainable development is the local community. It is at the local level that crucial decisions related to sustainable development are applied. Pollution and environmental degradation affect people directly, whatever their economic or social status. Combating environmental problems requires that people have access to accurate, timely information on the quality of their environment, as well as on health risks and hazards potentially affecting them and their communities.

It is also of the utmost importance that environmental laws and regulations provide clear rights and opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making. Public participation is the basis of all effective approaches to environmental policy formulation, whether the country is industrialized or developing, and is independent of the specific climatic and ecosystemic conditions.

Different Countries, Common Goals

Different Countries, Common Goals

In the North American experience, a rapidly developing country signed an agreement with two industrialized countries. This agreement shows that countries sharing a common concern for environmental protection can collaborate, even if they have different climates, ecosystems, cultures and levels of economic development, with due respect for their differences. They can work on projects that cross boundaries, while maintaining their own sovereign right over distinct national policies, laws, regulations and standards. Each nation must set its own priorities, according to its own circumstances.

Cooperation is most effective in preventing environmental problems, and contributes to a sense of “good neighborliness” that can extend into other areas or be called upon to solve problems when they do arise. This cooperative spirit is highly important, since as neighbors we do share so many environmental problems. Preventing problems, understanding our differences and reaching multilateral agreements—be they bilateral, regional or global—should prevail over unilateral action.

The writing of environmental provisions, in this case in the side accord to the trade liberalization agreement, provided a set of rules for environmental performance in North America. In fact, the North American Free Trade Agreement is the only trade agreement—among a proliferation of regional trade agreements—to consider the environment. The creation of the CEC provided a body to monitor and help prevent negative environmental effects resulting from freer trade. Such a body is well-suited to carrying out a wide range of cooperative environmental activities which are responsive to public priorities.

Five years after the Rio Summit, it is increasingly clear that the people of North America have identified the protection of our common natural heritage as a priority. This is now a deeply shared value, one that is not imposed by some countries onto others. Rather, working as full partners, we can rise to the challenge of achieving this common goal through cooperation and goodwill to do what is best for future generations.





WORKING TOGETHER: A NORTH AMERICAN AGENDA FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) facilitates cooperation and public participation to foster conservation, protection and enhancement of the North American environment for the benefit of present and future generations, in the context of increasing economic, trade and social links between Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Working in five major areas of concentration, the CEC strives to:

Environmental Conservation
... promote and conserve ecosystem health and integrity, and foster the conservation, protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and its components.

Protecting Human Health and the Environment
... facilitate cooperative initiatives to reduce the risks of pollution and minimize its impacts.

Environment Trade and Economy
... examine the relationship between policies for trade and the environment and encourage compatibility in these areas within the North American region.

Enforcement Cooperation and Law
... facilitate the development of law, policy and economic instruments; encourage alternative approaches to achieving compliance, including effective enforcement; and promote greater public participation and transparency in decision-making.

Information and Public Outreach
... raise the level of public awareness and understanding about the environmental challenges facing the NAFTA partners.