

COUNCIL SESSION 98-04
7 June 1998

SUMMARY RECORD

The Council, represented by the Alternate Representatives, met in Val-Morin, Québec, on 7 June 1998. Mr. José Luis Samaniego (Mexico) chaired the meeting and Messrs. Avrim Lazar and William Nitze represented Canada and the United States, respectively. Ms. Janine Ferretti, Interim Executive Director of the CEC and Mr. Marc Paquin, Council Secretary participated on behalf of the Secretariat. Ms. Mary Simon, Chair of JPAC, attended on behalf of the JPAC. Other officials were also in attendance.

Item 1 Adoption of the agenda

The Alternate Representatives agreed to discuss only Item 4 of the provisional agenda (1998 Regular session of the Council) and integrate the other agenda items as they came up during their discussion.

Item 2 1998 regular session of the Council

The Alternate Representatives agreed that the provisional agenda for the session is adequately designed as it will allow for a discussion by the Council of the central issues: first, the review of the vision for the CEC and the development of a strategic framework; and second, the review of the administrative functioning of the CEC, including the Article 14 process.

With regard to the public release of the report by the Independent Review Committee, the Alternate Representatives agreed to release it to the JPAC as soon as it is available in all three languages. The Secretariat is hoping to have it ready in all three languages by 19 June 1998. It was further agreed that the report will be made available to the public on the first day of the regular session of the Council (25 June 1998).

In order to provide assistance to Mexico in its battle against the current devastating forest fires it is facing, the Alternate Representatives discussed directing the 1996 excess funds to a special account to be opened in a Canadian bank to assist in recovery programs for the Chimalapas areas damaged by the fire. They further discussed the need to perform a close accounting of the use of the funds and that each disbursement should be supported by documents evidencing how the money will be spent. The United States indicated that formal approval must await internal clearance.

In addition, it was agreed that the Council could, in Mérida, direct the Secretariat to examine what mechanisms, if any, could be established to enhance cooperation among the Parties to respond to environmental emergencies. In preparation for this, the Secretariat, with the help of the Parties, will report to the Alternate Representatives on the status of any existing similar trilateral or binational mechanisms.

Regarding the Environment, Trade and Economy program, it was agreed that the GSC would meet by conference call to try to settle outstanding issues, after which any unresolved issues would be sent up for discussion at the Alternate Representatives level.

The Interim Executive Director indicated, with regard to the SMOC initiative, that a number of nomination dossiers will be ready for release and announcement by the Council at its regular session.

On the Article 14 process, it was agreed that the objective is to have revised guidelines ready for release to the JPAC for a 60-day review period at the Mérida session. Should any issue not be resolved at the GSC level before then, the Alternate Representatives will finalize the review.

The Secretariat will provide, for information, the Council with an outline of its internal management procedure for Article 14 submissions

The United States reiterated its long standing position that the Parties should move ahead expeditiously to complete the Part V model rules and that the Council should agree to the process and timeframe in which to develop such rules.

On TEIA, the Alternate Representatives agreed to inform their appropriate officials that they welcome the holding of an informal meeting of the heads of delegation on 11 June 1998 in Washington to look at possible ways to move forward with the negotiations.

Finally, with regard to the Council's agenda item pertaining to administrative procedures, Mexico explained that it was finalizing its proposal and that it would circulate it to the other Parties shortly. Mexico further explained that it sees three objectives behind the review of CEC administrative procedures: 1) to better allocate CEC resources where possible; 2) to ensure that the annual program and budget of the CEC reflects the priorities identified by the Council and 3) to better define the roles and responsibilities of CEC bodies (Council, JPAC, NACs, Secretariat).

Prepared by Marc Paquin, Council Secretary
8 June 1998