

OTHER INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

NAFTA/CEC

Decisions on Programme Activities

The Environment Ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States, members of the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), met for their regular session on 12 and 13 June 2000 in Dallas, Texas. The CEC was established by these three countries to build cooperation among the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Association) partners in implementing the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), the environmental side-agreement of NAFTA.¹

The aim of the meeting was to review and direct the programme activities of the Commission and receive input and advice from the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC),² and also from members of the countries' national advisory bodies and the public.

A final communiqué was issued at the close of the meeting, which set out the priorities for action for each of the above headings.

In the section on *Children's Health and the Environment*, the ministers recognise that the health and well-being of North America's children depends upon a clean environment. They endorse the ideals affirmed in the 1997 Declaration of the Environmental Leaders of the Eight on Children's Environmental Health, as well as Chapter 25 of Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

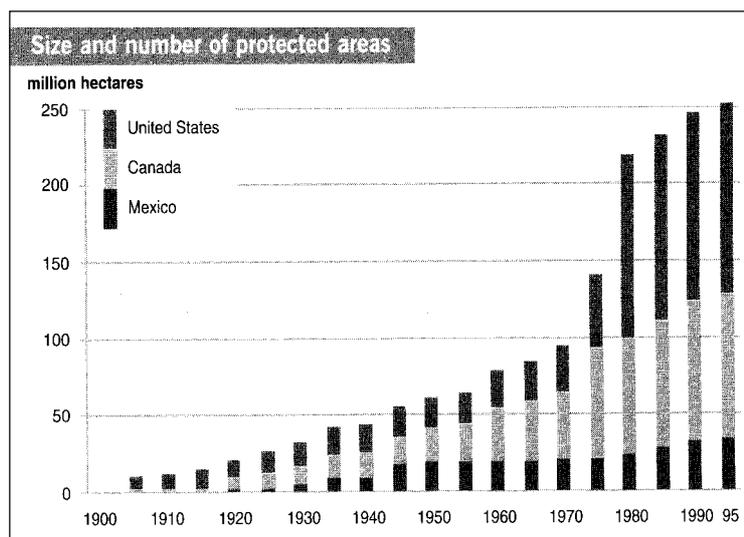
Regarding future work, it was decided to focus, as a starting point, on specific health outcomes such as asthma and other respiratory diseases, the effects of lead including lead poisoning, and the effects of exposure to other toxic substances.

Concerning *The Sound Management of Chemicals*, it was noted that the three countries have developed North American Regional Action Plans (NARAPs) for chlordane, PCBs and DDT. Two other NARAPs, one on dioxins and furans and hexachlorobenzene and the other on environmental monitoring and assessment, are under development.

The ministers approved the proposed NARAP on mercury. Lindane is a persistent organic pollutant registered for use as a pesticide and insecticide in all three of the North American countries, and ministers "looked forward to receiving comments on the proposal of the Substance Selection Task Force" for the development of a lindane NARAP, which is currently under public consultation.

The Commission's annual report on the *Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR)*, "taking stock," provides a regional overview of on-site releases of industrial pollutants directly into the air, land and water, as well as off-site transfers for treatment or disposal. The communiqué notes that "recognising the growing interest in PRTRs worldwide and North America's role as a leader in the field, we reaffirm our commitment to continue our individual and collective efforts to promote PRTRs and their development as well as public access domestically, regionally and internationally, and to promoting enhanced comparability among the national PRTR systems."

With regard to *Citizen Submissions on Enforcement Matters*, ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the citizen submission process and to a transparent process for



Courtesy: *Global Environment Outlook*

Discussions centred on:

- 1) Children's Health and the Environment.
- 2) The Sound Management of Chemicals (SMOC).
- 3) The Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR).
- 4) Citizen Submissions on Enforcement Matters, including release of the BC Hydro factual record.
- 5) Law and Policy.
- 6) Trade and Environment.
- 7) Conservation of Biodiversity.
- 8) The North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (NAFEC).

engaging the public on issues related to the implementation of this mechanism.

They agreed that issues concerning the implementation and further elaboration of Articles 14 and 15 of the Agreement may be referred to the JPAC so that it may conduct a public review with a view to providing advice to the Council as to how these issues might be addressed. Any Party, the Secretariat, and members of the public through the JPAC can also bring these issues to the attention of the Council.

On the matter of *Law and Policy*, the communiqué endorses the guidance document "Improving environmental performance and compliance: 10 elements of effective environmental management systems." This document represents the first time the Parties have jointly stated how voluntary EMSs (Environmental Management Strategies) designed for internal management purposes can also serve the broader public policy goals of compliance and improved environmental performance in regulated and non-regulated areas. It notes that "We believe this guidance document complements existing EMS models. EMSs do not replace the regulatory system, nor does the adoption of an EMS alone constitute compliance."

In the section on *Trade and Environment*, the communiqué notes that CEC discussions are already underway about the use of precaution as an important element of domestic environment and health policies, and its context-specific nature. "We encourage continued exchanges among respective trade and environment officials on the use of precaution in the Parties' environmental policies. We also encourage continued discussions of the contribution that environmental labelling, certification and mutual recognition might play in supporting environmental, economic and social objectives."

The document notes that with regard to the *Conservation of Biodiversity*, existing strategies for the region are not coping with the impacts caused by ever-increasing levels of development. Nor are they likely to address adequately the relatively new problems of climate change and increased numbers of invasive species.

The Parties had therefore agreed in 1999 to initiate trilateral cooperation aimed at conserving species of common concern. It was noted that the Parties will focus initially on 17 Species of Common Conservation Concern (SCCC).³ "We agree to carry out concerted action for developing habitat conservation initiatives and establishing international species conservation teams, and are seeking public comment on the proposed action plans."

The Parties noted that they are committed to the protection of marine biodiversity, through the establishment of a marine protected areas network, mapping marine ecosystems, addressing the threats of invasive species, and reducing the impact of land-based activities on the marine environment. Further, that they are committed to increase information exchange to support conservation and expand use of the North American Biodiversity Information Network (NABIN) as a key mechanism for sharing information and for modelling the potential ecosystem effects of climate change and the continental range of invasive species.

The Parties agreed that funding for the North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (NAFEC) shall be continued at its current level.

It was agreed to continue to support the CEC at the level of US\$9 million for the year 2001. Parties also agreed to meet in Mexico for the next regular session of Council in June 2001. (MJ) 

Notes

¹ 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 the equivalent) of the three countries, and meets once a year.

² 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.

³ *Mammals*: Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Sonoran Pronghorn, Lesser Long-nosed Bat, Mexican Long-nosed Bat, Mexican Black Bear, and Grey Wolf. *Birds*: Ferruginous Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Loggerhead Shrike, Piping Plover, Mountain Plover, Northern Spotted Owl, Mexican Spotted Owl, Golden-cheeked Warbler, Whooping Crane, California Condor, Burrowing Owl.