

## **Guidelines for Conducting Environmental Assessments of Projects Outside Canada**

These guidelines are intended to provide employees in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) with step-by-step information for conducting environmental assessments of projects outside Canada for which DFAIT is the responsible authority. If you are the person with overall responsibility for delivery or approval of projects outside Canada, you should review these procedural guidelines on a case-by-case basis. The guidelines support the *Projects Outside Canada Environmental Assessment Regulations* (POC Regulations) under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA). If you are responsible for real property projects at missions abroad, refer to Annex B, *Environmental Assessment Screenings of Real Property Projects*.

### **1. Background**

In the 1980s, the World Commission on Environment and Development, known as the Brundtland Commission, focussed public concern on the need for policies and practices that promote sustainable development – development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The Canadian government has declared its strong commitment to sustainable development, and is working to integrate sustainable development considerations into its decision-making processes.

Environmental assessment (EA) is an effective, established tool to help decision makers promote sustainable development. It provides a systematic approach for identifying the environmental effects of proposed projects early on in the planning process and on an equal basis with economic and social considerations. By identifying adverse environmental effects before they occur, EAs allow decision makers to modify plans so that the effects can be minimized or eliminated. In this way, EAs can save time and money in the planning process, and can help the Department demonstrate its commitment to environmental protection to other governments and the Canadian public.

On January 19, 1995, the CEAA was proclaimed law and for the first time in legislation set out the procedures for conducting EAs of projects for which a federal department or agency (called the responsible authority) holds decision-making authority. The POC Regulations, which were passed in November 1996, clarify the obligations of federal departments and agencies for conducting EAs under the CEAA outside of Canada.

### **2. Applicability of the POC Regulations**

In general, the POC Regulations will apply to property projects, projects supported by the Canada Fund or Mission-Administered Funds (MAF) at missions abroad, and to individual projects supported by Headquarters or mission funding for which DFAIT is the responsible authority under Section 12 of the *Financial Administration Act*. The environmental assessment (EA) process under the POC Regulations includes five key steps as highlighted in Table A-1 and described in detail in Section 3.