

Environment

The Commission for Environmental Co-operation (CEC) was created in 1994 by the North American Agreement on Environmental Co-operation (NAAEC) to enhance regional environmental co-operation, reduce potential trade and environmental conflicts and promote the effective enforcement of environmental law. It also facilitates co-operation and public participation to foster conservation, protection and enhancement of the North American environment. The Agreement, signed by Canada, Mexico and the United States, complements the environmental provisions established in the NAFTA.

The CEC consists of three principal components: the Council, the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) and the Secretariat. The Council, which is the governing body of the CEC and is composed of cabinet-level representatives from each of the three countries, met in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in June 1997. The Joint Public Advisory Committee is composed of 15 members, five from each of the three countries; it advises the Council on any matter within the scope of the Agreement. The Secretariat provides administrative, technical and operational support to the Council and is charged with the implementation of the annual work program.

Regarding the NAAEC, the Canadian Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) provides a mechanism for provincial participation in the Agreement and has now been signed by Alberta, Quebec and Manitoba. The IGA facilitates the provinces' participatory role in developing and managing Canada's involvement in the NAAEC.

The Council is responsible for approving the Commission's work program and the Secretariat receives endorsement to implement it. Progress has been made in several areas. On Sound Management of Chemicals, trilateral working groups are working toward developing regional action plans for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), mercury chlordane and dichloro-diphenyl-trichlorethane (DDT). Two other substances are likely to be identified for implementation in the course of 1997. On Climate Change, four joint implementation proposals — two related to carbon sequestration and two related to energy — have been chosen by the CEC for pre-feasibility studies.

It is also the Secretariat's role to consider complaints from any non-governmental organization or person asserting a party's failure to enforce its environmental law. As of June 1997 the Secretariat has received three such complaints. The Secretariat also prepares reports on any environmental matter related to the co-operative functions of the NAAEC.