

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

The following paragraphs briefly describe some of recent developments in the area of the protection of the environment that have special importance for Canada.

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) - Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x) Protocol

Under the aegis of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Canada, the United States and 33 European countries agreed on November 1, 1988, in Sofia, Bulgaria, on the elements of an international Protocol to control NO_x emissions. The United States signed the Protocol, making it the first multilateral agreement incorporating specific obligations to control transboundary air pollution to which both Canada and the United States are signatories. The Protocol also marks the first time that the U.S. Administration has accepted the concept of establishing emission control targets and schedules to achieve transboundary environmental quality objectives. (The United States did not sign the ECE Sulphur Protocol providing for a 30 percent reduction of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions.)

The NO_x Protocol will, as a first step, commit signatories to ensuring that, by 1994, their total national emissions of NO_x or their transboundary fluxes do not exceed their 1987 levels, and to begin negotiating further measures, to commence in 1996, to control NO_x emissions at the level required to achieve agreed upon environmental quality targets.

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) - Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) Protocol

In discussions during the ECE Executive Body meeting at Sofia, Bulgaria in November 1988, it was decided that member States should next address their efforts to elaborating a Protocol to control the emissions of VOCs. VOCs, together with NO_x, are the cause of a growing low level ozone problem in Canada.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention)

On March 22, 1989, in Basel, Switzerland, Canada was among the 34 countries and the EEC to sign the Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. The Convention, developed under the auspices of UNEP, obligates the exporter of hazardous wastes to notify and receive informed consent from both the importing and transit countries, prior to the initiation of any transboundary movement; recognizes that States have the sovereign right to prohibit all imports of