

The United Nations Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities was a response to an international call for coordinated actions at local, national, regional, and global levels to protect the marine environment. Co-led by Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada's National Programme of Action meets its domestic commitment to protect the marine environment from land-based activities under the Global Programme of Action. Under the North American Free Trade Agreement-Commission on Environmental Cooperation, Canada and the United States are also developing a subregional plan of action for the protection of the Gulf of Maine. Implementation of the National Programme of Action involves using sustainable and integrated environmental management approaches, such as the harmonization of coastal, river basin, and land-use plans.

At the first meeting of the Arctic Council in September 1998, Ministers from all eight circumpolar states adopted the Regional Programme of Action for the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, which addresses the impacts of the Arctic marine and coastal environment and recognizes the benefit of a phased approach to its development. The initial phase focuses on pollution impacts; in subsequent stages the focus will be expanded to include habitat protection in the coastal zone.

Canada is one of eight Arctic states, together with Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States. The Arctic Council was established in 1996 as a high-level forum to promote cooperation and coordination among the eight Arctic states on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection.

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

The Canadian Environment Protection Act (CEPA) was proclaimed in 1988 and is a cornerstone of federal environmental protection legislation. The act is concerned with the protection of the environment and of human life and health in Canada. It is, at present, being renewed, and the renewed CEPA will set in place a stronger emphasis on pollution prevention. The proposed act also provides mechanisms for cooperative action among governments, private industry, and other stakeholders to achieve the goals of the statute.

In terms of the effect that the revised act will have on protection of our oceans, the provisions governing toxic substances will enable control of releases that could harm the environment. It will also allow Canada to ratify the 1996 Protocol to the London Convention, 1972, the international agreement governing the disposal of waste at sea. The 1996 protocol is consistent with a pollution prevention approach. When it becomes law, the renewed CEPA will contain a list of what wastes are allowed to be disposed of at sea as well as the new obligation imposed on the Minister of the Environment to monitor ocean disposal sites. It will also impose on the Minister of the Environment the duty to carry out