

United States and Mexico and promotes joint efforts leading to enhanced working conditions," said Mr. Valcourt.

The Labour Commission will work to advance a comprehensive set of principles that are basic to all three countries. The Commission will provide a vehicle where concerns about labour practices in any of the NAFTA countries can be examined and where steps can be taken to ensure that each country enforces its laws. It will be directed by a Ministerial Council made up of ministers from each of the three countries -- in Canada's case, the Minister of Human Resources and Labour.

Canada's position during the negotiations was developed through close, ongoing consultations with the provinces and representatives from environmental and labour groups as well as business.

Talks will be held to include the provinces in the benefits and obligations of the agreements.

"We believe it is in the interests of all the provinces to participate in these agreements since they can play a vital role in preserving the environment and shaping the workplaces of the future," Mr. Hockin said. Negotiations on the side agreements were begun in Washington in March 1993 and followed talks on environmental and labour issues that began during the NAFTA negotiations.

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