



REPORT TO COUNCIL: NO. 98-02

Re: Summary of Round Table Discussion on the Commission for Environmental Cooperation's (CEC) Three-Year Program Plan 1999-2001

Introduction

JPAC is pleased to present this report to the Council members of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). It has been prepared taking into account the decisions between of the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) members and the public during a round table on the CEC's Three-Year Program Plan 1999-2001 on 3 December 1998 in Washington, DC. It is recognized that the Three-Year Program Plan will undergo changes and further iterations in the months and years ahead, and these comments should help inform those changes.

Overview

The Interim Executive Director of the CEC, Janine Ferretti, provided an overview of the Three-Year Program Plan.

- The Program Plan is driven by the *Shared Agenda for Action*, which contains the priority areas identified by Council. It provides the vision and thrust for the CEC's activities. The Secretariat has taken this framework and translated it into programs and projects.
- It is not yet a strategic plan. It attempts to provide a logical flow from concept to project.
- It is by no means perfect. There is a need to better define the relationship between projects; project results need to flow from the objectives, and we need to achieve measurable results in relation to those objectives.
- It begins to elaborate the role of the CEC in relationship to other institutions: that of catalyst, convener, information hub.
- It lays out our intentions and does not substitute for the annual program which is "our license to operate". However, the 1999 annual program looks much like the Program Plan. In 1999 we are trying to force a context between the valid, on-going work of the CEC and the new priorities set out in the *Shared Agenda for Action*.
- We are hoping for approval of the Program Plan in December so that the 1999 Annual Program and Budget can be approved.

- The Program Plan is a “living document” and will be continually modified and improved. We will make revisions in February and submit a new draft to Council in May for approval by Council in June. This schedule anticipates input from JPAC and the public.
- For example, comments received today which cannot be taken into account for the December approval date will be brought forward for review during the next revision.

The following is a summary of the points raised by the participants to inform a review of the Three-Year Program Plan

General Comments

- Continue the emphasis on public participation. Clarify how this will be achieved in the 1999 projects.
- Indicate where revisions are made in future drafts to facilitate review.
- There is concern about the speed at which this was put together. It should be made explicit that this is a “work in progress.”
- There is confusion about the difference between the Program Plan details and the 1999 Program. It does not look like a strategic plan. It is difficult to separate old initiatives from new ones. More explanatory material is required.
- There is a need for more focus. The number of projects has in fact increased from 18 to 21.
- How will this document be made public?
- More detail is required on how capacity building will be achieved in each project.
- The preparation of comparisons (key elements) to previous years would assist in measuring progress.
- JPAC is impressed with the progress made since Council Session of Mérida, so any criticisms should be set against this progress and the strong leadership shown by the Interim Executive Director.
- There is a need to have as a clear objective the more effective enforcement of environmental laws in each country.
- It appears that organization of the projects is built around the organization of the CEC staff. Is this the case? This could steer us away from strategic thinking.

- The Program Plan should more clearly capture linkages between priorities established by the *Shared Agenda for Action*. Projects should be tied together by this shared vision. Where is the strategy? The CEC should put the *Shared Agenda for Action* up front and build from there.
- Identify funds allocated and actions taken in previous years to show how projects are evolving, i.e., growing or phasing out. This would help give a sense of strategic context.
- Should also include the JPAC Vision Statement.
- Long-term strategic planning and attention to value added work is needed.
- There is a need to facilitate public comments. How can NGOs and special interests groups submit further comments? We require a contact.
- JPAC should continually consider ways to improve public involvement in this process.
- Environmental education is lacking as a permanent objective. This should be included.
- The program elements should try to articulate the interrelation of elements within the projects.

Environment, Economy and Trade Program

- Emerging Trends in North America is the linchpin of the CEC. We need a broader look toward the future, versus identifying what is happening now in order to improve our ability to act quickly before the impact occurs or is irreversible. Broad thinking is required to inform environmental decision-making.
- Should clarify why there is a need to better understand the relationship between trade and environment. For example, is this to influence public policy decisions or decisions about social impacts and implications?
- We urge continuation of the NAFTA Environmental Effects project. JPAC should have a structured conversation about the purposes of Article 10(6) and advise accordingly.
- Who decides, and according to what criteria, and how is it decided that there is a trend versus a short-term incident? These can be value judgments. This whole area requires some very hard thinking and has to be carried out in a responsible manner.

- Investment as part of the trade issue should be clearly stated in the NAFTA Environmental Effects Project.
- There is a need to deal with the trade and environment “head on.” This is the heart of the CEC’s mandate. The NAFTA Free Trade Commission and the CEC could act as a model by reinforcing the positive effects and mitigating the negative.

Conservation of Biodiversity

- What is sustainable and organic? There is a need to go beyond coffee as a project. This recommendation has been made in previous meetings. There is also a need to make a link with poverty issues.
- Standards are required for certification of sustainable tourism agencies.
- Research should be expanded to include trinational work on gray and humpback whales.
- The Strategic Directions for Conservation of Biodiversity work should include a wider group of stakeholders in the identification of priorities.
- It is very important to identify the commercial value of wildlife, but with caution by proceeding on a case-by-case basis. One criterion should be how actions benefit people on the ground and the wildlife species concerned, versus middlemen. Social and environmental sustainability both require evaluation before moving to stimulate or promote markets.
- Also, with sustainable tourism, economic and social value on the ground should be criteria, taking into account grass roots needs and realities.

Pollutants and Health

- The Improved Air Quality in North America project should continue and be part of the CEC’s strategic planning effort for the next three to five years.
- More detail is required on the Clean Development Mechanism.
- Attention should be paid to endocrine disrupters.
- There should be a focus on energy efficiency, credits for voluntary reduction and energy conservation.
- Infuse prevention throughout the document as integral to the promotion of sustainability.

- Coordinate with the National Round Tables on Pollution Prevention.
- Regarding the Clean Development Mechanism, use the North American trading block as a model for international efforts, i.e., joint implementation on emissions.
- If the CEC wants to be relevant, the main environmental issue on the public mind is climate change. This should be a source of work and the CEC should be very aggressive.
- The CEC has a political as well as a technical responsibility to keep the issue of climate change on the political agenda.

Law and Policy Program

- Law enforcement should move beyond industry to other sectors.
- A diagnosis of the capability of Mexican laboratories is required to quickly assess needs for technical assistance.
- Indicators are very important. What is the rationale for reducing the budget?

APPROVED BY JPAC MEMBERS

3 December 1998