



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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Ms. Octaviana Trujillo, Ph.D.,
Chair, U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee
2692 North Sandstone Way
Flagstaff, AZ 85745

Office of
International and
Tribal Affairs

Brian Houseal
Chair, U.S. National Advisory Committee
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry
25 Sam Spear Road
Westport, NY 12993

Dear Dr. Trujillo and Mr. Houseal:

On behalf of Administrator Gina McCarthy, I would like to thank you for the National Advisory Committee (NAC) and Government Advisory Committee (GAC) letter of advice of June 16, 2014 reporting on its forty-second meeting held April 10-11, 2014 in Washington, D.C. We appreciate the recommendations provided by you on the 20th Anniversary of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) and the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), the communications and outreach efforts for the CEC and the 20th Anniversary, and the strategic priorities laid out for the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

It was a pleasure for the Administrator and me to attend the NAC and GAC meeting in Washington, D.C. and to meet with the chairs and Mr. Lozano at the Council Session in Yellowknife, Canada. The good discussions in both Washington and Yellowknife have helped us to strengthen our own relationship with NAC/GAC and the relationship of the communities we serve. We agree that the collective knowledge of the NAC/GAC is an invaluable resource and will take your advice seriously as we work to align the actions of the parties and the CEC with the recommendations the advisory committees provide. As the chair of the CEC this year, the U.S. will look to the NAC/GAC for support in revitalizing and invigorating the CEC agenda to meet the most pressing environmental challenges facing North America.

Thank you for the NAC/GAC efforts to build broader awareness of the CEC during the 20th Anniversary and for developing the "CEC 101" slide presentation. We agree this is a useful tool to further our efforts to increase awareness about the CEC and we will use it as a resource to introduce CEC to North American constituencies. As you saw in Yellowknife, we are redoubling efforts to tap into a larger public audience through the use of video, social media, webcasting, and video conferencing. This year, more than 50 people in 6 locations across North America participated in communication hubs that allowed them the opportunity to interact with Council Ministers during the Council Public Town Hall. Other creative tools, such as the photo contest and the 20th anniversary highlights, are also being utilized to engage and inform a broader North American audience. We look forward to receiving further advice on creative

ways to effectively convey the value of information generated by CEC across business, academia, indigenous peoples, and local governments and communities.

We recognize that many environmental issues are cross cutting and agree that the CEC work must ensure collaboration across and between our respective governments, sectors, and communities. As you know, Council has outlined new strategic priorities and cross-cutting themes for the CEC 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. The new priorities are representative of the environmental challenges we face today and are a clear reflection of the recommendations provided by the NAC/GAC as well as the Joint Public Advisory Committee. In identifying the new priorities, we have maintained the links to the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan in recognition of the significant work that has already been accomplished as well as renewed engagement across all sectors.

Addressing climate change remains a top priority for the Council and we agree that a strategic refocusing on climate change is important. We also agree that the conservation and restoration of coastal blue carbon habitats and the ocean acidification issues should be taken into consideration as we develop the new strategic and operational plans.

With regards to the CEC budget, we recognize the importance of a healthy budget for CEC to accomplish its mandate. The Parties remain committed to ensuring that the cooperative work program continues to deliver high-impact results. We agree with your observation that the NAPECA funded grants need to be more cohesive and strategic to ensure that the pilot projects can be scaled up to assist vulnerable communities, and we will work with the Parties and Secretariat to address this concern.

We also agree with your recommendation to improve the metrics by which the CEC measures program and operational performance. In response to the Council request to deliver more robust metrics and analysis, the CEC has proposed a framework for performance measurement and strategic planning. The framework proposes measures to address internal efficiencies and project performance as well as the effectiveness of public engagement and outreach. We welcome your input as the Parties review the framework.

Finally, we would like to recognize and thank the NAC/GAC for raising the importance of climate change and other environmental impacts to the tribes. As a result, this year's Council Session took a historic step in discussing the preservation of traditional ecological knowledge and practices of local and indigenous communities across North America. We will continue to work with the NAC/GAC in exploring ways to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into the activities of the new strategic and operational plans.

We would like to thank the NAC and GAC for your valuable advice on the first 20 years of NAFTA and the CEC, and we look forward to our continuing dialogue and commitment to protecting the North American environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jane Nishida".

Jane Nishida
Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator