Category: **Obligation to Facilitate Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making**

Sub-Category: Public Participation Platforms or Bodies

Name of Good Practice: The Joint Public Advisory Committee of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation

Key Words: Access to Information, Accountability, Internet, Participation, Regional

Implementing Actors: Regional Organisation: North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation; Individuals

Location: Canada, Mexico, United States

Description: Since 1994, Canada, Mexico and the United States have collaborated in protecting North America's environment through the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), which came into force at the same time as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The NAAEC established an intergovernmental organization, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), to support cooperation among the NAFTA partners to address environmental issues of continental concern. The CEC is composed of three bodies: a Council of environmental ministers, which serves as the governing body of the CEC; ; a Secretariat; and the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), a public, non-governmental advisory group.

The JPAC is composed of fifteen citizens (five appointed by each State party) who advise the Council on any matter within the scope of the NAAEC, and provides technical, scientific or other information for the CEC Secretariat, including information relating to the Submission on Enforcement Matters Process under the NAAEC. According to the CEC’s website, JPAC's vision is “to promote continental cooperation in ecosystem protection and sustainable economic development, and to ensure active public participation and transparency in the actions of the Commission” and as a “group of volunteer citizens, JPAC sees itself a microcosm of the public: independent individuals who contribute diverse but rich institutional experience and cultural perspectives.” The JPAC meets throughout the year in different locations within the three countries, typically in conjunction with CEC events, and also holds workshops, roundtables and other meetings. Records from all the JPAC meetings are available on the CEC website.

The creation of JPAC, a formally recognised public consultation body under the NAAEC, can serve as an example of a good practice in other environmental treaties.

Further Information: JPAC’s website: <http://www.cec.org/Page.asp?PageID=1226&SiteNodeID=208&BL_ExpandID=567>.