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Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol

Second session

Maastricht, the Netherlands, 3 and 4 July 2014

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

Promotion and capacity-building: coordination mechanisms and synergies

Global round table on PRTRs¹ held in Geneva on 19 November 2013

Joint report by the secretariat of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Summary

A global round table on pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs) was held in Geneva, Switzerland on 19 November 2013 with a view to promoting the transfer of knowledge and fostering environmental democracy around the globe. The round table was co-organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). The initiative for the event came from the Working Group of the Parties of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) to the ECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

¹ Pollutant release and transfer registers.

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(Aarhus Convention) and the OECD Task Force on PRTRs. The format and content of the round table was agreed at the meetings of those bodies over the course of 2011 and 2012, pursuant to proposals from those bodies' Bureaux. Given the extensive experience of UNITAR in pursuing activities on PRTRs in different regions, it was invited to cooperate on the organization of the event.

In particular, the global round table took stock of successes and challenges in implementing the ECE Protocol on PRTRs and PRTR systems to date with a view to guiding future work aimed at establishing and implementing PRTRs and enhancing existing PRTR systems. Examples provided during the meeting showcased the harmonization of national PRTRs with registers from neighbouring countries, the potential use of PRTRs as a generalized reporting platform to fit reporting requirements from other multilateral environmental agreements, as well as the joint use of PRTRs by a variety of national agencies and other organizations, in particular to measure progress in promoting sustainable development.

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I. Introduction

1. A global round table on pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs), co-chaired by Mr. Michel Amand (Belgium), Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Releases and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs; Kyiv Protocol) to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), and Mr. Noriyuki Suzuki (Japan), Chair of the Task Force on Pollutant Releases and Transfer Registers under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), was held on 19 November 2013 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

2. Representatives of Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry, intergovernmental organizations and academic institutions from different continents came to Geneva to discuss PRTRs — one of the key tools for environmental transparency. The event took stock of successes and challenges in the implementation of PRTR systems and provided a snapshot of current activities that will help to guide the establishment and implementation of new PRTRs, and enhance existing PRTRs across the globe.

3. PRTRs allow access to specific environmental information for everybody, with virtually no restriction. Free web-based access to geo-referenced environmental data empowers the public, decision makers in government and industry, scientists and journalists to make informed choices. Furthermore, a well-established network on environmental data created through PRTRs allows industries to validate their efforts in reaching sustainability. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Protocol on PRTRs is the only legally binding instrument on PRTRs to ensure minimum standards for equal rights and transparency in the use of environmental data. It offers a solid legal framework for enhancing public access to information and moving towards sustainable and environmentally sound development, thereby protecting the health of present and future generations.

4. The event, co-organized by ECE and OECD, in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), is a remarkable example of synergy. For the first time, the three organizations matched their expertise and capacities to organize this joint meeting aiming at promoting the transfer of knowledge and thereby fostering environmental democracy around the world.²

A. Attendance

5. Delegations from the following Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs attended the round table: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, European Union (EU), Finland, France, Hungary, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

6. Several Signatories to the Protocol were also represented at the meeting, including: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan.

7. The following States also sent delegations to the round table: Belarus, Brazil, Chile, Honduras, Japan, Kazakhstan, United States of America and Uzbekistan.

² Statements and other materials from the round table are available from http://www.unece.org/prtr_grt2013.html.

8. Also attending the meeting were representatives of OECD, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office in Tajikistan, UNITAR and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). Representatives of the following NGOs attended: the Bureau of Environmental Investigation (Ukraine); Eco-Globe (Armenia); EcoLomics International (Switzerland); “ECOSCOPE” (Azerbaijan); European Environmental Bureau and the European ECO Forum (Belgium); “Greenwomen” Analytical Environmental Agency (Kazakhstan); Hayajan Nature Protection and Rehabilitation Organization (Azerbaijan); the International Investment Centre (Russian Federation); and “Volgograd Ecopress” Information Centre (Russian Federation). In addition, a representative of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and a public interest lawyer (Switzerland) attended the meeting.

B. Proceedings

9. ECE Executive Secretary Mr. Sven Alkalaj, in a welcoming statement, highlighted a number of issues, including the importance of PRTRs in providing basic information to allow for informed choices and the direct link of PRTR data to major environmental issues, such as climate change. He further emphasized the global and cross-sectoral nature of the Protocol on PRTRs, which meant that partnerships and cooperation were at its heart. Ambassador Remigi Winzap, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the World Trade Organization and the European Free Trade Association, delivered a keynote address underlining the achievement of PRTRs in establishing a national legal basis for making environmental information publicly available; because of PRTRs, data on emissions of pollutants were easily accessible in many countries of the world today. Moreover, PRTRs were influencing the decision-making process in companies. It was, however, necessary to ensure public awareness about PRTRs and in that connection, Mr. Winzap welcomed the PRTR community’s spirit of sharing knowledge and information. The round table co-Chairs also made introductory statements. Participants adopted the provisional programme of the round table.

10. The round table was divided into five sessions. During the first session experts from participating countries addressed how PRTRs contribute to sustainable development, highlighting the benefits and opportunities offered by this instrument. The discussion included a number of issues, such as: (a) the potential for PRTRs to show use of resources (including energy consumption) and data on waste minimization; (b) how recent advances in information technology have impacted on the access to, quality and use of PRTR data; (c) the future needs of PRTR data users; (d) using PRTR data to estimate environmental impact; (e) how PRTRs can function as a single window for environmental reporting and compliance with international standards; (f) how PRTR data can help to develop national inventories in compliance with international agreements on chemicals; (g) the role of PRTRs in collecting data on greenhouse gases; and (h) PRTRs as a tool to communicate environmental information to the public.

11. The second session provided an opportunity to share good practices in PRTR implementation, highlighting lessons learned and suggestions for improvements. The discussion addressed the following issues: (a) how to ensure effective involvement of enterprises, including foreign industrial facilities; (b) how PRTR data is managed (e.g., who pays for it and who carries it out); (c) estimation techniques (e.g., for diffuse releases); and (d) the role of stakeholders.

12. Regional examples of harmonized PRTRs were presented under the fourth point on the agenda. This included, e.g., the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (E-PRTR), regional PRTRs in Central and Latin America and regional PRTRs in North America.

13. The fifth session aimed to demonstrate experiences of different international forums dealing with PRTRs, highlighting the geographical and substantive focus of their activities, as well as tools and material which they can offer. These forums included activities under ECE, OECD, UNEP and UNITAR. The session also addressed the joint cooperation of these forums on PRTRs and potential for strengthening synergies.

14. Closing statements by the Chairs were presented at the end of the round table.

15. In addition, prior to the round table, a survey on PRTRs was initiated. This survey was jointly prepared by ECE, OECD and UNITAR and open to participants and other interested members of the public. Preliminary outcomes of the survey were presented at the round table. The final results can be used to help the PRTR community in planning and implementation of future activities, and are available to the public on the round table's web page.

II. Pollutant release and transfer registers: benefits and opportunities

A. Presentations

16. Mr. Stephen DeVito, a Senior Scientist with the United States Environmental Protection Agency, gave a presentation on the need to define the role of PRTR information in sustainability, which was a growing global paradigm. For example, chemical manufacturers were implementing green chemistry and other sustainability practices to reduce the use of toxic chemicals in industrial manufacture; those green chemistry and green engineering achievements were detectable in PRTR data. As global chemical production continued to increase, so would the need to track emissions and transfers of industrial pollutants on a global scale.

17. How was it that to date the role of PRTRs in assessing progress towards achieving global sustainability had never been defined or discussed? Little specific guidance existed on how PRTR data could be used as a sustainability tool. Furthermore, existing PRTRs were designed to track emissions and waste transfers on a country or continental level, but not on a global level. However, frameworks for using PRTR data and information to assess progress towards sustainability were being developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Toxics Release Inventory Programme and the OECD Task Force on PRTRs, Mr. DeVito noted.

18. Mr. Øyvind Hetland, Senior Engineer at the Norwegian Environment Agency, discussed the use of PRTRs to estimate the use of resources. In that regard, he noted that energy consumption data was part of the reporting obligation in Norway. Two case studies from the Norwegian PRTR showed that PRTR data on energy consumption and hazardous waste could be used to present valuable insights on resource use efficiency over the past few years.

19. Mr. Hetland observed that the global economic crisis as well as local specifics of the production processes impacted the data reported to the PRTR system. Presenting a specific case of two aluminium producers, he demonstrated that direct comparisons between individual facilities needed to make use of information that might not be contained in a standard PRTR, but which nevertheless could be accessed on a case-by-case basis.

20. Mr. Marcos Serrano, Head of the Department of Environmental Statistics and Information at the Ministry of Environment of Chile, presented the single-window approach of the PRTR in Chile. In that context, the specific regulation on PRTR

implementation had recently been approved in Chile, as the legally binding instrument for various stakeholders to report to the PRTR.

21. That regulation was aimed at fully establishing the Chilean PRTR as a single window for future environmental reporting. The single window allowed operators to use one unique portal to comply with all reporting requirements from different institutions, which facilitated homologation of data and avoided duplication of reports. In addition, the PRTR system in Chile could thus be used to report to other international standards, such as to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm Convention), and inventories of greenhouse gas emissions.

22. Ms. Silvia Nicolaescu, Chief Advisory Officer with the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova, said that the Republic of Moldova was very much taking part in major international instruments for the environmental sector, and in particular with regard to tools for the regulation of chemicals. While in that context national efforts focused on improving legislative and reporting matters, it was recognized that an efficient future PRTR system was a tool ready to help fulfil a variety of international obligations and serve as a single database for national reporting.

23. Ms. Kristina Saarinen, Team Leader at the Environmental Performance Division of the Finnish Environment Institute, presented the use of PRTR data in greenhouse gas (GHG) emission Inventories. Though the same substances were addressed in both PRTR and GHG inventories, there were still important differences between data characteristics in PRTR and GHG emission inventories due to the different data aggregation levels and documentation needs. PRTR data covered only part of the activities and sectors included under GHG inventories and was obtained from facilities only above a certain capacity and/or emission threshold, while all emission sources and emissions, no matter the size, were requested under GHG emission inventories.

24. When used in emission inventories, the PRTR data from each facility should be available at the level of detail needed for the GHG inventory. Plant operators should use the specific requirements set by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in calculating GHG emissions, and the data should be verified by authorities to meet the requirements before it was accepted into the authorities' databases. The use of data reported by the facilities in the inventory increased the overall accuracy of the inventory. For instance, in Finland the data reported by a production site was shared between the different authorities and used to cover all the needs of a variety of emission inventories.

25. Mr. Jan Marsak, Director of the Waste Management Department at the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, presented PRTRs as a tool to communicate environmental information to the public. PRTRs should be user-friendly and ensure accessibility. PRTR data was a powerful tool for communicating information about the environment. At the same time, there were major challenges in how to efficiently communicate, disseminate and present the available environmental information.

26. In that context, Mr. Marsak noted that dissemination and presentation of data were an integral part of the PRTR process. No single approach served all purposes. Data should be provided in different forms for different audiences, as different targeted groups had different needs. It was necessary to provide PRTR data as individual data sets, aggregated data and jointly with geographical data. Additional information about pollutants, like the health impact of pollutants, was strongly needed. Analysis with existing economic, social, and other statistical data should be provided.

B. Discussion

27. During the ensuing discussion, speakers noted that the development of new PRTR systems held opportunities as well as challenges. It was said that PRTRs should be open towards new developments and new ideas. For example, their structure should allow for the integration of substances covered by other chemical conventions, such as the Stockholm Convention. Further examples of opportunities were the Norwegian PRTR, which recorded the use of energy as an addition to the list of chemical substances covered by the Protocol on PRTRs. That idea was found by other countries to be useful, as it would allow for the analysis needed to measure progress in sustainable development.

28. It was agreed by several countries and participants that it made sense to use the synergies from using a single reporting platform for environmental reporting. For example, that could include reporting to a variety of national agencies, as well as reporting with regard to compliance with international standards. The Protocol on PRTRs was found to provide an ideal basis for such work. PRTR systems used for reporting and measuring national progress concerning international obligations had, however, to be thoroughly adapted in order to ensure that all requirements were fit. With regard to reporting to the UNFCCC, PRTR data in its current form needed to be split up in accordance with the sectors on which information was required and then put back together. In order to properly address those challenges, the reporting format could be designed taking such questions into account while following the aim to simplify the overall reporting process for facilities and industries, which needed to go through the reporting process for several agencies and/or multilateral environmental agreements.

29. Transparent data could create peer pressure and thus reduce use of resources, production of waste and emission of pollutants. Furthermore, in the United States of America good practices by companies received official recognition by the Environmental Protection Agency. That was done in order to provide incentives for companies to go beyond simply fulfilling the requirements set by legislation.

30. Analysis of PRTR data was another area that could impact public interest in PRTRs and the value of PRTR databases. Better accessibility of tools for data analysis and examples of good use of PRTR data analysis for different types of users helped to increase benefits from existing pollutant databases. A good example of how to provide users with tools to analyse PRTR data was provided by Canada, Mexico and the United States through the Commission for Environmental Cooperation and its tool, Taking Stock Online: North American industrial pollution tool.

31. It was important to note that the public's interest in chemical emissions varied a good deal. Different target groups had different information needs. In the Czech Republic, the information on health impacts of the pollutants listed in the PRTR was directly available as part of the PRTR system, to allow a more accurate evaluation of the possible risks associated with the amount of toxic emissions released by a facility. Such matching of health and chemical data also pointed up the need to better link the data flow between governmental organizations. A good example of that would be Chile's strategy to have all relevant government organizations working with a "single window" concept on PRTR and industrial reporting obligations. The exchange between different government agencies was therefore greatly facilitated, using synergies and creating new opportunities.

III. Problematic areas and pathways for progress: good practices in pollutant release and transfer register implementation

A. Presentations

32. Ms. Sabrina Andrade, Hazardous Waste Manager at the Ministry of Environment of Brazil, said Brazil's PRTR was being developed by her Ministry with the support of a consultancy firm. Brazil was implementing the PRTR gradually, and had held various awareness-raising workshops and trainings with different stakeholders.

33. Brazil already had legislation mandating the implementation of the Federal Technical Registry. In 2009, a specific instruction under that law established the obligations for a national PRTR under the Federal Registry. In the current phase of implementation and for the past three years, data had been reported to the PRTR register but remained unpublished. Data would effectively be made available after the validation and certification of the programme, which was expected to take place in 2015, and would be based on a recently improved declaration form which would help with the task of accreditation.

34. Mr. Uri Shilhav, PRTR Coordinator at the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Israel, said Israel had made rapid progress in the implementation of its PRTR since its ratification of the Kyiv Protocol in January 2013. Recommendations based on the Israeli experience included acceding to the Kyiv Protocol, displaying political and management commitment, providing capacity-building for reporting facilities and analysing and assimilating data within the data collecting organization. Detailed budget figures from the implementation project identified the PRTR software development as the major item of expenditure in what had been an overall very positive experience of implementation of Israel's new national PRTR-system.

35. Mr. Iñigo de Vicente-Mingarro, PRTR Expert with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment of Spain, presented estimation techniques in PRTRs. "Point sources" were defined by national or international PRTRs by industrial categories and thresholds. From Spanish experience, releases to air, water and land were reported in three steps: (a) pollutant selection; (b) total emission calculation (considering all types of emissions, normal operating, fugitive, diffuse and accidental when appropriated); and (c) measurement (M)/calculation (C)/expert judgement (E) code selection, specifying in each case the standard, methodology, emission factor, technical reference, etc., used to determine the emission value. Off-site transfer of wastes was reported in four steps: (a) identification of waste type using the European List of Wastes; (b) total amount transferred; (c) M/C/E code selection (mainly M); and (d) waste treatment operation and whether the transport was transboundary or not.

36. Two types of diffuse sources had been identified: other industrial sources, which included point sources below thresholds, and diffuse sources such as, e.g., transportation, and agriculture. Estimating diffuse sources was challenging, and contained a number of technical difficulties. Nevertheless, it was mandatory for various purposes to possess the complete set of inventories including diffuse sources. Today, efforts to estimate diffuse sources were made at the national and at international level.

37. Ms. Mara Silina, Programme Coordinator at the European Environmental Bureau/European ECO Forum, addressed the many further opportunities to make good use of the PRTR tool. NGOs played an important role in the implementation of the Protocol on PRTRs and the improvement of established PRTRs. That was based on their differing perspective on how to bring the PRTR data closer to the people and how to empower citizens through their effective use of the environmental data available through PRTR systems.

38. In detail, and among others, NGOs identified the following needs: lower thresholds for pollutant emissions; independent monitoring of the reporting, as sometimes the public did not trust official data; and a need to compare and link PRTR data with statistics from other areas like health, to include more factual data and to take into account local specificities when reporting on substances. Furthermore, it was necessary to present data in a more comparable, easy-to-analyse way through harmonization of different PRTR systems at the global level. The latter would moreover facilitate exchange of knowledge and allow for the actual use and interpretation of PRTR data by civil society.

39. Mr. Dmytro Skrylnikov, Head of the Bureau of Environmental Investigation, laid out some of the needs and challenges for implementation of PRTRs in countries with economies in transition. Challenges came along together with the first steps of implementation, such as establishing a regulatory framework through ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs, amending existing legislation and adopting new national legislation on PRTRs. In addition, it had to be decided whether it was worthwhile to use and adapt existing data collection and reporting systems or whether to concentrate efforts and start with a new PRTR system.

40. The development of institutional structure and capacity most importantly faced challenges, such as: a lack of coordination and information sharing between institutions; technical issues concerning data management, providing access to data and the dissemination of data; and education and awareness-raising among all stakeholder groups. The above steps were an important part of what needed to be carefully addressed in order to take full advantage of a PRTR system in countries with economies in transition.

B. Discussion

41. In the discussion, it was noted that the challenges faced in implementation of the Protocol depended on the chosen pathway for implementation, e.g., the use and adaptation of existing information and reporting tools for pollutants versus the establishment of a new PRTR system. Challenges also included legislative issues and the technical relevance of set thresholds for reporting. In Armenia, for example, application of the Protocol on PRTRs thresholds for reporting of pollutants would result in only some four or five companies having a reporting obligation.

42. Financial concerns were also crucial. In many countries, the structure of financial support to basic PRTR functions would be based principally upon the ministerial budget. However, external support might be provided as, for example, was done in Brazil, with a World Bank loan to fund the first two years of implementation. Activities such as analysis of data, tools to facilitate interpretation of data and intensive quality control were often not included in the regular budget of national PRTR systems. However, data analysis was key to making direct use of the benefits PRTR data provided and countries were looking for when deciding to adopt to PRTRs. An example given was providing access to green markets for enterprises that could show a good track record of their efforts on sustainable production.

43. One of the biggest challenges during the initial implementation of a PRTR system in Israel had been the software development for the geo-referenced PRTR database. That was partly due to internal environmental agency procedures. On the other hand, the use of agency procedures in dealing with cases of non-compliance allowed for a comparably easy implementation of the PRTR system among industry.

IV. Harmonized pollutant release and transfer registers

Presentations

44. Ms. Eva Goossens, Project Manager for Industrial Emissions with the European Environment Agency, introduced the European E-PRTR as an example of a harmonized PRTR system. E-PRTR was based on a previous register, the European Pollutant Emission Register, and the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive.³ It covered the 28 EU member States, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Serbia and Switzerland on a voluntary basis. All those countries had implemented the E-PRTR Regulation during the period 2007–2009 and member States had satisfactorily reported the requested data from 2007 onwards. Annual reporting obligations existed for 91 pollutants, including the 86 pollutants of the Protocol on PRTRs plus Hexabromobiphenyl, Octylphenols, Fluoranthene, Isodrin and Benzo(g,h,i)perylene.

45. With regard to data quality, data on releases to air of pollutants such as nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides and carbon dioxide were mostly complete and consistent when compared to other international reporting obligations or inventories. However, inconsistency in relation to other substances and the respective national inventories still existed. The biggest challenge identified was in the inventory of releases to soil. The scope for further improving the implementation of the E-PRTR included enhancing the quality of data and user confidence, improving data use and exchange and further examining the legal basis of the E-PRTR and links with other legislation. A clear potential for wider use by multiple stakeholders had been identified.

46. Ms. Marcia Cecilia Suazo Hernandez, PRTR National Coordinator for the Ministry of the Environment of Honduras, presented the PRTR in Honduras and the regional PRTR of Central America and the Dominican Republic. Most of the Central American countries were far advanced in terms of designing national PRTRs; nevertheless, the implementation of such a tool had been limited due to a lack of economic resources. A regional PRTR also presented other difficulties, such as harmonization and validation of data.

47. Ms. Suazo Hernandez gave an overview of status of PRTRs in each Central American country, including the list of chemicals and sectors of the regional PRTR and other elements that were the basis to homologate PRTR data among the Central American countries involved. The principal areas for improvement were in the standardization of data, technical and scientific training and the building of long-term capacities to ensure sustainability of the national PRTRs.

48. Mr. DeVito, Senior Scientist at the United States Environmental Protection Agency, presented the North American PRTR project, which was part of the Air Quality and Pollutant Releases Program of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). For the United States, the Toxic Release Inventory has been updated by: (a) rulemaking activities, such as electronic reporting; (b) adding a “university challenge”, a collaborative project with universities, students and professors to better understand and address data-user needs and promote the use of PRTR data on behalf of vulnerable communities; and (c) much more emphasis had been laid on access to the pollution prevention information collected by the Toxic Release Inventory, and its use in sustainable development. The Canadian National Pollutant Release Inventory was expected to align its substance list with Canada’s Chemicals Management Plan and to employ a single window for environmental reporting.

³ Directive 2008/1/EC concerning integrated pollution prevention and control.

49. The “Taking Stock” report and the CEC website provide harmonized PRTR data from Canada, Mexico and the United States. That made it possible, for example, to visualize historical trends of emissions to air from electric utilities from 2005–2010 for all of North America. The CEC Action Plan to Enhance the Comparability of PRTRs in North America, originally published in 2005, was currently being updated. The Action Plan was the ongoing result of efforts to enhance the comparability of the individual North American countries’ PRTR systems and laid out the strategy for improving the information available for decision-making in North America.

V. Joining efforts and looking for synergy: international forums dealing with pollutant release and transfer registers

Presentations

50. Mr. Nicholas Obe (United Kingdom), Vice-Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs, observed that the Protocol was the first legally binding tool for strengthening public access to environmental data. An important strength of a legally binding instrument lay in its multilateral institutional framework. For the Protocol on PRTRs, the latter consisted of the Meeting of the Parties, the Bureau, the Compliance Committee and the Working Group of the Parties, all of which helped to assist Parties in implementing the Protocol. That included facilitating the exchange of experience and good practices, preparing guidance material and recommendations, developing additional legally binding instruments and carrying out capacity-building. Key aspects of technical assistance activities were, e.g., subregional workshops in Minsk and in Sarajevo, matching country needs with available expertise and cooperation on country-specific projects implemented by partner organizations.

51. The adoption of a legally binding instrument sent a strong signal to other States, including trade and aid partners, as well as foreign investors and international institutions, of a Government’s commitment to effective governance and democracy. Compliance and reporting mechanisms as part of the governing structure made a very significant contribution to the effectiveness of the instrument.

52. Mr. Suzuki, Chair of the OECD Task Force on PRTRs, said that in 1996 OECD had recommended its members to establish PRTRs and had set out a core set of elements to be included and some guiding principles. In 1996 only two countries had an operational PRTR that conformed with the OECD guiding principles; by 2009, the number of countries establishing PRTRs had increased to 39. Initially, OECD activities focused on how to establish PRTRs among its members. That was followed by a shift in focus to data quality and release estimation techniques. Recent activities were focused on harmonization of PRTR systems, the practical use of PRTR data and using PRTRs to foster sustainable development. The Task Force produced a number of technical documents on release estimation techniques, the use of PRTR data, sustainability, harmonization and databases, which could also assist Parties to the Kyiv Protocol in implementing PRTRs.

53. Mr. Hirofumi Aizawa of the OECD Secretariat presented additional activities linked with the Task Force on PRTRs. Application of PRTR data was considered for revising the OECD Environmental Core Indicators. OECD together with UNITAR was also developing a PRTR module for the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals Toolbox for Decision Making in Chemicals Management. On PRTRs, OECD worked closely with the other international organizations, such as ECE, UNEP and UNITAR.

54. Mr. Jorge Ocaña, Task Manager for Persistent Organic Pollutants and Chemicals at UNEP, outlined UNEP activities in relation to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and PRTRs. GEF was the financial mechanism for the Stockholm Convention. The Stockholm Convention text made reference to the Protocol on PRTRs as the basis for a GEF-funded PRTR project in 2009–2012. The project had helped to successfully implement a PRTR in Chile, and to develop National PRTR Executive Proposals (PRTR design) in Cambodia, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, Peru, Thailand and Ukraine.

55. A new GEF-funded PRTR implementation project sought to implement PRTRs by 2018 in the participating countries Belarus, Cambodia, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, Peru and the Republic of Moldova, to, among others, facilitate national reporting under the Stockholm Convention. Key issues prior to implementing PRTRs were to identify the tool as a national priority and to use GEF support to help boost the current work in the participating countries.

VI. Closing statements by the Chairs

56. The Chairs thanked the participating countries for sharing their achievements, challenges and commitments in the implementation of PRTR systems. They further observed that the meeting had been helpful for those participating, and agreed that there had been an ample number of substantial ideas expressed that would feed the process of implementing PRTRs. Importantly, that was also the case for countries with established PRTR systems.

57. The following outcomes of the global round table on PRTRs were presented by the Chairs:

(a) Green chemistry and green engineering were crucial for reaching sustainability. PRTR data could be used to detect achievements in green chemistry and green engineering, thereby measuring progress in sustainability;

(b) PRTRs had great potential to show the state of use of resources, such as with regard to energy consumption or waste management. Those issues should be further explored and widely applied;

(c) The “single window” approach to environmental reporting through PRTR systems had proven to be the most effective. Countries should strive to establish it. In particular, countries with economies in transition that were only starting to establish PRTR systems should consider it as a priority approach;

(d) PRTRs were a tool that could be used to report on other relevant international commitments;

(e) PRTRs should be a tool to effectively communicate environmental information to the public. Efforts focusing in that direction were very important and helped to better compare emissions from production facilities and, more generally, to explain how to sensibly interpret and how to make use of PRTR data. Efforts should be made to provide capacity-building and raise awareness among various authorities, the public and industry. Industry, at the same time, could recognize benefits from establishing PRTRs, including positive financial implications;

(f) A number of general challenges to PRTR implementation still exist, e.g., public mistrust towards official data, the need to link PRTR data to health-related data and to make factual data available in addition to calculations on emission quantities in order to validate PRTR data. Estimation of diffuse emissions also remains a challenge;

(g) Furthermore, challenges specific to countries with economies in transition embrace a wide range of topics, starting with establishing proper regulatory and institutional frameworks and improving the coordination between the institutions, which forms the basis for establishing PRTRs, as well as ensuring technical and financial capacities;

(h) At the same time, a number of good practices and tools, including estimation techniques, such as the OECD resource compendium for release estimation techniques, are already available and some PRTR software follows open source standards and is free of charge;

(i) With regard to regional harmonized PRTRs, remarkable examples exist in Central America, Europe and North America. The substantial efforts made there on these issues deserve appreciation. The cases presented are very good examples which illustrate the way forward for global PRTR development;

(j) Multiple experiences from a variety of countries and subregions further show that accession to the PRTR Protocol and implementing PRTR systems are both feasible. However, the time frame for PRTR implementation depends on political good will. Willingness to invest in human and technical resources remains key for successful implementation;

(k) International forums dealing with PRTRs should continue strengthening synergies and work in close partnership on further implementation around the globe. A number of different initiatives relevant to PRTRs are taking place and complement each other. An example is the OECD Task Force on PRTRs, which works on leading technical development of PRTR systems in an OECD framework and works together with the Kyiv Protocol on PRTRs, which remains the only legally binding instrument on PRTRs.

58. Pursuant to the numerous statements made by participants, the Chairs concluded that the global round table demonstrated remarkable synergies between the three partner organizations, which had matched capacities and expertise for the first time to co-organize a joint meeting. It also provided a unique platform for governments, industry, NGOs, academic institutions and other stakeholders to share experiences and knowledge. There was a general support for a possible second joint event in the future.