

**Welcome address by Mr. Sven Alkalaj**  
**Executive Secretary**  
**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)**

**Global Round Table**  
**on**  
**Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs)**

organized under the auspices of ECE and the Organisation for  
Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),  
in cooperation with  
the United Nations Institute for Training and Research  
(UNITAR)

19 November 2013, Salle VII, Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
starting at 10 a.m.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It gives me great pleasure to welcome you today in this historic place. The Palais des Nations has a long history of hosting events to build consensus, promote cooperation and give new hope to peoples and nations.
- Today's gathering is very much in keeping with this tradition. It has brought together Governments, non-governmental organizations and representatives from industry, intergovernmental organizations and academic institutions from different continents to discuss Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers — one of the key tools for environmental transparency.
- Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers — or PRTRs — were traditionally perceived as technical tools, but recently they are becoming more and more relevant for decision-making as they help Governments, industry and the public to make informed choices.
- Furthermore, as PRTRs provide a public record of emissions and transfers of carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases, they also contribute to global efforts to combat climate change.
- In 2003, 10 years ago now, the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers was adopted in Kyiv. It was designed as a global treaty, which means it is open to any Member State of the United Nations, irrespective of the regions in which they are located.

- It is an honour for ECE to host this remarkable treaty. Its strength lies in its solid legal framework, and I am very proud to say that this Kyiv Protocol has been used as a prototype for establishing PRTRs across the globe. I would therefore take this opportunity to encourage countries in their endeavours to become a Party to the Protocol or to replicate its provisions.
- As of today, PRTRs are mostly established in developed countries, as they require considerable technical capacity. I therefore recognize that many challenges still exist for less developed countries to establish full-fledged PRTR systems. But I am convinced that this will be a worthwhile investment.
- At the same time, countries facing economic challenges are clearly increasingly recognizing the value of these instruments. In this regard, I would like to congratulate countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region for the remarkable progress they have achieved in establishing PRTRs, and the Republic of Moldova, the first country from Eastern Europe that has completed its national procedure for accession to the Kyiv Protocol.
- Due to the cross-sectoral nature of PRTRs, partnerships are at their heart. PRTRs provide a good opportunity to establish close collaboration with the private sector, as well as with numerous actors at the national level and internationally. I call upon countries to make full use of these opportunities.
- Talking about partnerships, let me warmly thank the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development — OECD — and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research— UNITAR — for their fruitful and continuous cooperation on a number of activities, including

co-organizing today's event. I very much look forward to our effective teamwork in the future.

- Let me also express my appreciation to the Governments of Belgium and Japan for their effective leadership in activities in this area within ECE and OECD.
- ECE has also been pleased to cooperate with the United Nations Environment Programme — UNEP — and the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions. In this context I would emphasize the important contribution that the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters — or Aarhus Convention — as well as its Protocol on PRTRs can make to transparency and awareness-raising in the field of chemicals' management.
- I also welcome the active involvement of other international and regional organizations in promoting and supporting the development of PRTRs. I would particularly mention the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe — OSCE — which has actively supported PRTR-related capacity-building efforts through its sponsorship of Aarhus Centres and its cooperation in the development of PRTRs in countries with economies in transition.
- When looking at our experience in the implementation of PRTRs, we can certainly say that they have become an important tool for strengthening environmental democracy in the region and around the globe.
- Nations, gathered at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro — the Rio+20 Conference — made a number of commitments for improving access to environmental information. I am

convinced that PRTRs, and in particular the Kyiv Protocol, through its legal obligations, will provide a solid and comprehensive framework for Governments to effectively evaluate progress in working towards a green economy, the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals.

Dear colleagues,

- ECE is proud to open its doors today to countries and partner organizations that came to Geneva to celebrate successes, share good practices and discuss challenges in developing PRTRs.
- I consider that this meeting launches a new phase in the work on PRTRs, a phase focused on joining efforts to deepen practical implementation of PRTRs and to promote their geographical expansion. I am confident that your deliberations today will provide a strong foundation for the work ahead. I wish you every success.
- Now it is my pleasure and honour to invite His Excellency, Ambassador Remigi Winzap, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the World Trade Organization and the European Free Trade Association to address the meeting.

---