



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
30 May 2016

Original: English

## Economic Commission for Europe

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

### Working Group of the Parties

#### Fourth meeting

Madrid, Spain, 26 November 2015

## Report of the Working Group of the Parties on its fourth meeting

### Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction .....	3
A. Attendance .....	3
B. Organizational matters .....	4
II. Status of ratification of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers .....	4
III. Designation of national focal points .....	4
IV. Promotion and capacity-building .....	4
A. Synergies with partner organizations .....	4
B. Subregional workshops .....	6
C. Electronic tools .....	6
D. Global promotion of the Protocol .....	6
E. Other relevant activities .....	7
V. Compliance and reporting mechanisms .....	7
VI. Implementation of the Protocol's current work programme, including financial matters .....	8

GE.16-08532(E)



\* 1 6 0 8 5 3 2 \*

Please recycle



VII.	Third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.....	9
VIII.	Calendar of meetings.....	9
IX.	Adoption of the decisions and outcomes of the meeting.....	9

## I. Introduction

1. The fourth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was held on 26 November 2015 in Madrid.<sup>1</sup> The meeting was organized within the framework of “International PRTR Week”, hosted by the Government of Spain in Madrid, which also included the Second Global Round Table on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (24–25 November 2015),<sup>2</sup> the eighteenth meeting of the Task Force on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (23–24 May 2016), and the ninth meeting of the Protocol’s Bureau (27 November 2015).

### A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by delegations from the following Parties to the Protocol: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, European Union, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

3. The meeting was attended by delegations from the following signatories to the Protocol: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

4. Delegations from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Ecuador, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan were also present.

5. Also attending were representatives of the following international and regional organizations: OECD; the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office in Tajikistan; the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP); and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). In addition, representatives from the following organizations, bodies and institutes were present: the Aarhus Centre of Turkmenistan; the Aarhus Centre of Ukraine; the Aarhus Information Centre — Vlore (Albania); the Committee for Sustainable Development and Environment of the Spanish Confederation of Business and Industries (CEOE) (Spain); EX Research Institute Ltd. (Japan); the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (Switzerland); Oficemen — the Spanish Cement Association (Spain); the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (Armenia); the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary); the Spanish Association of the Electricity Sector (UNESA) (Spain); the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) (Spain); and the Yerevan Aarhus Centre (Armenia). The Chair of the Protocol’s Compliance Committee was also present. Furthermore, representatives of international, regional and national environmental non-governmental organizations participated in the meeting, many of whom coordinated their input within the framework of the European ECO Forum.

<sup>1</sup> Documents for the meeting and other information, including a list of participants, are available online from <http://www.unece.org/prtrwgp4.html>. Statements delivered at the meeting that were made available to the secretariat by delegates are also accessible from this web page.

<sup>2</sup> More information on the Round Table is available from [http://www.unece.org/prtr\\_grt2015/](http://www.unece.org/prtr_grt2015/).

## **B. Organizational matters**

6. Ms. Tina Skårman (Sweden), Chair of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol, opened the meeting.

7. The Chair informed the Working Group that, with a view to ensuring equal opportunities for English-, French- and Russian-speaking delegations, the meeting would result in a list of decisions and outcomes that would be distributed by e-mail to meeting participants around 40 minutes before the close of the meeting and would be presented by the Chair verbally for adoption, thereby allowing for interpretation. The adopted list of decisions and outcomes would be distributed to participants by e-mail after the meeting and would be incorporated in the meeting report.

8. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the Chair and adopted the agenda for the meeting as set out in document ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2015/1.

## **II. Status of ratification of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers**

9. The secretariat reported on the status of ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs. Since the adoption of the Protocol in 2003, 38 States had become signatories and there were currently 33 Parties. The Protocol had entered into force on 8 October 2009. Since the second session of the Meeting of the Parties (Maastricht, the Netherlands, 2–4 July 2014) there had been no new ratifications of the Protocol.<sup>3</sup>

10. The Working Group took note of the report by the secretariat on the status of ratification of the Protocol and encouraged signatories and other interested States to proceed with accession to the Protocol as soon as possible.

## **III. Designation of national focal points**

11. The Working Group took note of the report prepared by the secretariat on the status of designation of national focal points (PRTR/WG.1/2015/Inf.1)<sup>4</sup> in accordance with the decision of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its first session (Geneva, 20–22 April 2010; see ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/2, para. 32). The only Party that had not nominated its national focal point was Slovenia. The following signatories had not nominated their national focal points: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Italy and Tajikistan. The Working Group called upon those Governments that had not designated a focal point to proceed with the designation as soon as possible.

## **IV. Promotion and capacity-building**

### **A. Synergies with partner organizations**

12. Turning to synergies with partner organizations, the Chair opened the session by summarizing the discussion at the most recent meeting of representatives of the governing

---

<sup>3</sup> Information on the status of ratifications is available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/ratification.html>.

<sup>4</sup> A list of national focal points is available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/nfp.html>.

bodies of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) multilateral environmental agreements (Geneva, 26 October 2015).

13. A representative of OECD informed the Working Group about activities of the Task Force on PRTRs, which supported countries' PRTR-related efforts by providing new methodologies and tools. Currently, the main focus of the work of the Task Force was on assisting countries in setting up harmonized PRTR systems, improving existing PRTRs and enhancing the use of PRTR data in the context of measuring progress in achieving sustainable development at the national and global levels.

14. The representative of UNEP presented UNEP PRTR-related activities in three areas: (a) as an implementing agency for the Global Environment Facility<sup>5</sup>-funded project to help countries identify PRTRs as a mechanism for reporting under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm Convention); (b) with regard to work under the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution<sup>6</sup> and its Mediterranean Action Plan; and (c) in outreach to the private sector within the UNEP programme on chemicals and products, specifically in the textile sector. With regard to that work, he highlighted that countries' legal frameworks were very important for defining and implementing national PRTR activities. There were also parts of the private sector that recognized PRTRs as the best mechanism to inform the public about the environmental performance of production facilities and communicate with local governments and communities about the improvements in chemicals management that they sought from those facilities.

15. A representative of UNITAR also spoke about the execution of the recent Global Environment Facility-funded global project on the implementation of PRTRs as a tool for reporting on persistent organic pollutants, dissemination of information and awareness-raising, for which UNEP was the implementing agency. The main goal of the project was to demonstrate that PRTRs were an important tool to meet the reporting obligations under multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Stockholm Convention, and to collect lessons learned and develop guidance material for that purpose.

16. The representative of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe presented the Centre's project to support the establishment and advancement of PRTRs in Western Balkan countries and in the Republic of Moldova. The project was funded by the German Federal Environment Ministry's advisory assistance programme and aimed, e.g., to build capacities of authorities and operators responsible for regular reporting, to increase the transparency of PRTR decision-making and to assist countries to improve their practices in operating PRTRs.

17. The Working Group took note of the presentations and thanked all partner organizations for the support provided to further implementation of PRTR systems, thereby strengthening countries' capacities to accede to the Protocol on PRTRs.

18. Furthermore, the Working Group called upon:

(a) Partner organizations and multilateral environmental agreements to cooperate closely where possible to create synergies that furthered the implementation of the projects and programmes related to PRTRs;

(b) Governments to strengthen cooperation between experts dealing with the Protocol on PRTRs and those dealing with the ECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, the ECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of

---

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.unep.org/dgef/AboutUNEPGEF/tabid/54444/Default.aspx>.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.unepmap.org/index.php?module=content2&catid=001001004>.

Industrial Accidents, the ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, the UNEP chemicals conventions and other relevant agreements, as well as those involved in PRTR projects carried out by international organizations, so as to ensure coordination and synergy at the national level.

19. Recalling paragraph 7 of the Maastricht Declaration on transparency as a driving force for environmental democracy (Maastricht Declaration) (ECE/MP.PP/2014/27/Add.1–ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/2/Add.1),<sup>7</sup> the Working Group encouraged Governments and stakeholders to consider implementation of the Protocol and the pan-European Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in synergy.

## **B. Subregional workshops**

20. The secretariat and delegations provided information on subregional workshops to promote and raise awareness about the Protocol. The Working Group took note of the information presented and mandated the secretariat to organize a subregional workshop for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in 2016. The Working Group encouraged Governments and stakeholders to consider supporting the workshop through in-kind or financial contributions.

## **C. Electronic tools**

21. The secretariat reported on recent developments regarding electronic tools, including the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy<sup>8</sup> and PRTR.net.<sup>9</sup> In addition, a representative of OECD presented a new version of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals<sup>10</sup> Toolbox for Decision-making in Chemicals Management.<sup>11</sup> The Toolbox provided Governments with an interactive platform for collaboration among different ministries, agencies and other stakeholders.

22. The Working Group requested the secretariat to continue working closely with OECD and UNITAR to ensure the effective use of PRTR.net and PRTR Learn and encouraged Governments and stakeholders to consider financially supporting the upgrade of PRTR.net.

## **D. Global promotion of the Protocol**

23. In a discussion on the global promotion of the Protocol, the Working Group welcomed the joint efforts of ECE and OECD in organizing the Second Global Round Table on PRTRs and the cooperation with UNEP and UNITAR on the event. It took note of the Round Table outcomes, and requested the secretariat to prepare, in cooperation with OECD, a formal report on the Round Table in the three official ECE languages for

---

<sup>7</sup> Available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5&mopp2/hls.html>.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/>.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://prtr.net>.

<sup>10</sup> The Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals was established in 1995 to strengthen cooperation and increase coordination in the field of chemical safety. The nine Participating Organizations are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, OECD, UNEP, UNITAR, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the World Bank and the World Health Organization.

<sup>11</sup> Available from <http://iomctoolbox.oecd.org/>.

submission to the Working Group's next meeting. It also mandated the Bureau and the secretariat to explore opportunities for organizing a third global event and to continue the global promotion of the Protocol.

24. The Chair of the International Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers Coordinating Group<sup>12</sup> presented the Group's work and invited countries and organizations to participate. The Group's objectives were closely linked to the themes discussed at the Second Global Round Table on PRTRs. The main purpose of the Group was to promote and improve the coordination among the different international organizations, governments and other stakeholders. It further aimed to take stock of activities around the globe aimed at, e.g., fostering the implementation of PRTRs, improving the usage of PRTR data and identifying potential for the future development of PRTRs.

25. Following an initial exchange of views on the role of the Protocol in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>13</sup> the Working Group mandated the Bureau with the support of the secretariat to develop a note on the links between the Protocol and the global Sustainable Development Goals.

## **E. Other relevant activities**

26. Armenia and Belarus reported on the results of the survey on the implementation of PRTRs and the promotion of the Protocol in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (PRTR/WG.1/2015/Inf.2). The Working Group took note of the report, thanked those countries that had responded to the survey and expressed its appreciation to Armenia and Belarus for presenting the survey's outcomes.

## **V. Compliance and reporting mechanism**

27. The secretariat reported on developments regarding the membership of the Compliance Committee. Mr. Ralid Ajabboune (France), elected by the Meeting of the Parties at its second session, had informed the secretariat that he could not continue as a Committee member. Following that resignation, France had nominated Mr. Nicolas Encausse as a replacement for Mr. Ajabboune. According to rules 22, paragraph 5, and 23, paragraph 2, of the Rules of Procedure (see ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/2/Add.1, decision I/1, annex) and the structure and functions of the Compliance Committee and procedures for the review of compliance (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/2/Add.1, decision I/2, annex), the Bureau would consider this nomination at its next meeting.<sup>14</sup>

28. The Chair of the Compliance Committee reported on the Committee's activities since the previous meeting of the Working Group and presented two documents: "Draft systemic issues concerning the implementation of the Protocol and recommendations on how to address them" (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2015/5); and "Draft guidance for reporting on implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers" (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2015/6).

29. The Chair of the Working Group recalled that the documents had been developed through a consultative process, in which Parties and stakeholders had had an opportunity to provide their comments during two rounds of consultations in March and May 2015. Addressing concerns, she noted that the document on draft systemic issues concerning the

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/intlcfgimages/about.html>.

<sup>13</sup> General Assembly resolution A/70/1. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>.

<sup>14</sup> The document containing the decisions is available from [http://www.unece.org/env/pp/mopp1.html#](http://www.unece.org/env/pp/mopp1.html#/).

implementation of the Protocol and recommendations on how to address them offered flexible guidance that Parties could apply in order to meet the challenges addressed through the Maastricht Declaration and article 6, paragraph 2, of the Protocol.

30. After discussion, the Working Group agreed that participants could send their written comments to the two draft documents before a deadline of 20 January 2016. It requested the Chair of the Compliance Committee, in cooperation with the Bureau and with support from the secretariat, to finalize the two documents in the light of the comments provided and to submit them to the Working Group of the Parties at its fifth meeting for a final review. The document would subsequently be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties for consideration at its third session in 2017.

31. In the context of the discussion on systemic issues concerning the implementation of the Protocol, the European ECO Forum presented preliminary results of a survey it had conducted among countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia on the storage of hazardous substances in obsolete facilities. The Working Group thanked the European ECO Forum for conducting the survey and reporting its results.

32. Turning to the reporting mechanism, the Working Group took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the status of submission of national implementation reports since the second session of the Meeting of the Parties and requested Slovenia, as the only Party that had not submitted a report, to urgently submit its report.

## **VI. Implementation of the Protocol's current work programme, including financial matters**

33. Regarding the implementation of the current work programme, the Working Group took note of the:

(a) Report on implementation of the work programmes of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for 2011–2014 and 2015–2017 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2015/3);

(b) Report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the work programmes of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for 2011–2014 and 2015–2017 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2015/4), as well as the informal note on contributions received between 15 August and 16 November 2015 (PRTR/WG.1/2015/Inf.3);

(c) Information provided by the secretariat on the human and financial resource situation of the secretariat and on expected contributions.

34. The Working Group also took note of the information provided by the Chair on the discontinuation of the administrative support post funded from the 13 per cent programme support costs. It expressed its strong concern with regard to that decision, requesting ECE to explore opportunities to reconsider that decision in the future and to again assign the administrative support post to service the Protocol.

35. The Working Group also expressed its appreciation for the work done by the secretariat, as well as its concern with regard to the shortage of contributions and the low number of pledges. It further recognized the difficulties posed by limited and unpredictable funding.

## VII. Third session of the Meeting of the Parties

36. Regarding the third session of the Meeting of the Parties, the Working Group:

(a) Took note of the information provided by the secretariat regarding the related outcomes of the nineteenth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention (Geneva, 17–19 June 2016);<sup>15</sup>

(b) Took note of possible dates suggested by the secretariat for the third session to be held towards the end of June or the end of September 2017;

(c) Welcomed the preliminary interest expressed by the Government of Montenegro to host the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, and requested the secretariat to further liaise with the Government of Montenegro on that matter;

(d) Called on other interested Parties to inform the secretariat by January 2016 about their potential interest in hosting the event, also taking into consideration that the session would be organized back to back with the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, and mandated the secretariat to liaise with potentially interested Parties on the matter;

(e) Mandated the Bureau to take the decision on the hosting and timing prior to the next meeting of the Working Group, as appropriate, and to report to the Working Group on the topic at its next meeting.

## VIII. Calendar of meetings

37. The Working Group took note of the meetings planned for 2016.<sup>16</sup>

## IX. Adoption of the decisions and outcomes of the meeting

38. The Working Group adopted the major outcomes and decisions presented by the Chair at the meeting (PRTR/WG.1/2015/Inf.4) and requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, to finalize the report incorporating the outcomes and decisions adopted.

39. Ms. Guillermina Yanguas Montero, Director-General of Environmental Quality and Assessment and Nature Affairs with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment of Spain, thanked the participants and highlighted the Protocol's role as an important global instrument for ensuring that environmental information was easily accessible to all stakeholders.

40. The Chair then closed the meeting and thanked the participants for their contributions, the interpreters and the secretariat for their support, and the host country for the excellent organization of the event.

---

<sup>15</sup> See ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2015/2, available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/wgp19.html#/>.

<sup>16</sup> A calendar of meetings for 2016 is available from <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/public-participation/meetings-and-events.html>.