

Economic Commission for Europe

Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

Working Group of the Parties

Eighth meeting

Hybrid format, Geneva, 16 and 18 December 2020

DECISIONS AND MAJOR OUTCOMES¹

as adopted by the Working Group at its eighth meeting

Item 1. Adoption of agenda

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the information provided by the Chair and of statements by participants;
- ii) adopted operating procedures to facilitate remote participation and decision-making in eighth meeting of the Protocol's Working Group of the Parties due to extraordinary circumstances as contained in the document ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/12;
- iii) adopted the agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/1.

Item 2. Status of ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the information provided by the secretariat;
- ii) welcomed accession to the Protocol by Kazakhstan and ratification of the Protocol by Italy;
- iii) encouraged Signatories and other interested States to proceed with accession to the Protocol as soon as possible.

Item 3. Designation of National Focal Points

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the status of nominations of National Focal Points;
- ii) called upon those Parties, which have not nominated a focal point to date, namely, Italy, Kazakhstan, and the Netherlands, to proceed with the nomination without any delay.

¹ This document was not formally edited.

Item 4. Promotion and capacity-building

The Working Group took note of the statements and of information provided by participants on this agenda item.

(a) Coordination mechanisms and synergies

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the information provided by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and thanked them and other partner organisations for support provided to furthering implementation of PRTRs systems thereby strengthening countries' capacities to accede to the Protocol on PRTRs;
- ii) took note of the report by the Chair of the International PRTR Coordinating Group and welcomed the Group's important role for contributing to a more transversal perspective of the PRTRs development, and expressed its appreciation to Spain for its continuous leadership of this significant work;
- iii) called upon relevant partner organisations and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to cooperate closely where possible to create synergies to further the implementation of the projects related to PRTRs;
- iv) reiterated its call upon governments to strengthen cooperation between experts dealing with the PRTR Protocol and those dealing with the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention), Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), UNEP/ Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) and UNEP Conventions on Chemicals (BRS Conventions and the Minamata Convention on Mercury), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant agreements and programmes, as well as involved in projects carried out by international organisations as to ensure coordination at national level;
- v) reiterated its call on Parties, other interested countries and organizations to promote PRTRs as a reporting tool for MEAs dealing with chemicals and other relevant MEAs;
- vi) reiterated its call upon Parties, other interested countries and organizations to consider implementation of the Protocol and Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in synergy.

(b) Global promotion of the Protocol

The Working Group:

- i) called upon Parties, other interested States and organisations to continue global promotion of the Protocol including by making relevant guidance material available in all United Nations languages;
- ii) reiterated its call upon the secretariat and interested States to translate the text of the Protocol in other United Nations official languages.

Item 5: Compliance and reporting mechanisms

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the statements by participants;
- ii) took note of information provided by the secretariat on the preparations for the 2021 reporting cycle;
- iii) urged Slovenia to submit their national implementation report for the new 2021 reporting cycle without delay;
- iv) took note of the document on Membership of the Compliance Committee ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/3;
- v) took note of the report of the Compliance Committee on its eight meeting (ECE/MP.PRTR/C.1/2020/2) and agreed to assign the Committee with the task to prepare a synthesis report on the basis of national implementation reports.

Item 6. Development of the Protocol

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the progressive examples that showcase the development of PRTRs by going beyond the minimum requirements of the Protocol presented by the European Union and Spain, as well as of the information provided by Minamata Convention secretariat;
- ii) took note of the statements and information provided by participants and expressed its appreciation to presenters for sharing these valuable experiences;
- iii) recognised the importance of modernising pollutant release and transfer register systems;
- iv) recognised the usefulness of such activities in showing ways of how to optimize existing PRTR systems and design new PRTRs that address the Protocol's objective to establish coherent and integrated PRTRs in an efficient manner;
- v) took note of the Report on the outcomes of the survey on the experiences in implementing the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/4);

vi) approved as amended at the meeting a draft decision on development of the Protocol (PRTR/WG.1/2020/Inf.5) and mandated the Bureau to finalize it for submission and adoption at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

Item 7. Implementation of the work programmes for 2018–2021, including financial matters

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the Report on implementation of the work programme of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/5);
- ii) took note of the Report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the work programme of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/6) and of the Note on contributions and pledges received between 1 October and 1 December 2020 (PRTR/WG.1/2020/Inf.1) requesting to revise it after the meeting in the light of the comments received;
- iii) took note of the statements by participants and expressed appreciation for the work done by the secretariat and recognized the difficulties posed by limited and unpredictable funding;
- iv) expressed its concern with regard to low number of pledges;
- v) reiterated its call on Parties to strive not to earmark large contributions for specific purpose as to facilitate the management of funds for implementation of the work programme in a balanced way.

Item 8. Preparations for the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol

(a) Hosting and preparatory timeline

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the information provided by the secretariat regarding the related outcomes of the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention (Geneva, 28–29 October 2020);
- ii) took note of the planned dates for the fourth session to be held towards mid-October 2021 (Current dates 21–22 October 2021);
- iii)) noted that due to COVID-19 pandemic Georgia cannot confirm its commitment to host the sessions of the Meetings of the Parties to the Protocol and the Convention;
- iv) noted the Bureau decision that in these circumstances the next session should be held in Geneva unless any Party would confirm its willingness to host the session;
- v) mandated the Bureau to take the decision on the hosting and timing and to proceed with the preparations for the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties as was planned and

reassess the situation in Spring 2021 as needed;

vi) took note of the information provided by the secretariat regarding the preparatory timeline for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (PRTR/WG.1/2019/Inf.5) which will be updated in relation to the hosting.

(b) Substantive preparations

(i) Agenda for the fourth session

The Working Group:

i) took note of the statements of participants and approved as amended at the meeting the draft provisional agenda of the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/7);

ii) mandated the Bureau to finalize the agenda and submit it to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption at its fourth session.

(ii) Declaration

The Working Group:

i) took note of the statements of participants on the draft declaration (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/11);

ii) mandated the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol to finalize it in cooperation with the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention, with a view to its submission for consideration and adoption at the high-level segment.

(iii) Work programme for 2022–2025

The Working Group took note of the statements of participants and approved the draft decision on the work programme for 2022–2025 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/8) and mandated the Bureau to finalize it for submission and adoption at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

(iv) Reporting requirements

The Working Group took note of the statements of participants and approved the draft decision on reporting requirements (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/10) and mandated the Bureau to finalize it for submission and adoption at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

(v) Financial arrangements under the Protocol

The Working Group took note of the statements of participants and approved the draft decision on financial arrangements under the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/9) requesting to keep both options for a scheme of contributions (mandatory and voluntary), and mandated the Bureau to finalize it for submission and adoption at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

Item 9. Subregional and national activities: achievements, needs and challenges for capacity building, 10–11.45

The Working Group:

- i) expressed its appreciation to representatives of Albania, Belarus, Columbia, Tajikistan and Turkey for sharing valuable experiences;
- ii) expressed its appreciation to representatives of UNEP MAP and Minamata Convention, and other partner organisations, including EEA, UNITAR and OECD for the organisations' important work in providing opportunities for capacity building;
- iii) took note of the information provided by the presenters and participants;
- iv) welcomed efforts by countries and organizations to promote the establishment of PRTR systems and steps taken towards implementation of and accession to the Protocol;
- v) requested the Bureau and the secretariat to explore an opportunity for organising a similar session on capacity building at the future meetings of the Working Group of the Parties.

Item 10. Calendar of meetings

The Working Group took note of the tentative schedule of relevant meetings planned for 2021.

Item 11. Other business

No issues were discussed.

Item 12. Adoption of decisions and outcomes of the meeting

The Working Group took note of the presence of Parties and adopted the major outcomes and decisions presented by the Chair at the meeting (as contained in this document PRTR/WG.1/2020/Inf.2) and requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, to finalize the report and incorporate these adopted outcomes and decisions.
