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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

Fourth session

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Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Programme of work and operation of the Protocol:
implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021**

Report on the implementation of the work programme of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for 2018–2021

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present report was prepared by the secretariat pursuant to decision III/2 of the 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.^a It provides an overview of the implementation of the Protocol's work programme for 2018–2021 as of 1 July 2021.

^a ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6/Add.1, decision III/2, para. 2.

I. Introduction

1. The present document provides an overview of the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6/Add.1, decision III/2, annex) for 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 (Aarhus Convention) as of 1 July 2021, focusing on operational and organizational aspects. Owing to the cross-cutting nature of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs), the implementation of different work programme areas contributed to furthering the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals across the whole 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular, Goals 3, 6, 9, 12 and 16. An overview of contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the work programme is provided in the report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the Protocol's work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2021/9). The report also provides information on the linkages between the activities of the work programme and focal areas and objectives laid down in the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.1, decision II/2, annex). In that context, it should be noted that, while the report on implementation is centred around activities carried out by the secretariat and the Protocol's bodies, the strategic plan includes objectives that are intended to be implemented not only by the secretariat and the Protocol bodies, but also by the Parties, civil society organizations and other partners.

2. In implementing the work programme, the secretariat made strenuous efforts to avoid duplication of work and inefficient use of resources by:

- (a) Pursuing synergies with activities under other partner organizations;
- (b) Conducting specific thematic surveys prior to activities in order to better respond to the needs of Parties and stakeholders;
- (c) Continuously increasing the use and development of electronic tools for Protocol activities (for example, email consultations, telephone conferences, online databases, the online reporting tool for national implementation reports, the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy and the PRTR.net global portal).

II. Overview of implementation of the work programme

A. Compliance mechanism

3. During the reporting period (1 January 2018–1 July 2021), the Protocol Compliance Committee held its seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth meetings (Geneva, 1 and 2 April 2019; 30 and 31 March 2020; 28 and 29 April 2021; and 31 May and 1 June 2021, respectively).¹ Its eleventh meeting is planned to take place in Geneva, on 22 October 2021. The main focus of the Committee's work has been on assisting Parties in their efforts to implement the Protocol, including through preparing, with the support of the secretariat, a synthesis report on the status of implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/2021/10) based on national implementation reports submitted in the 2021 reporting cycle.

4. The Committee also continued deliberations on the issue of whether European Union member States that were Parties to the Protocol were required under the Protocol to introduce their own national PRTRs to supplement what was done at the European Union level. The Committee, at its eighth meeting, agreed that it required more information in order to further explore the issue. To this end, taking into consideration the related information provided by Finland in its 2017 national implementation report, the Committee agreed to send questions to Finland in order to clarify the matter further.² The questions and the accompanying letter

¹ Meeting documents and other information on the work of the Compliance Committee are available at www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr-cc.html.

² ECE/MP.PRTR/C.1/2020/2, para. 7.

were sent by the Committee's Chair on behalf of the Committee to the Party's national focal point. The Chair's letter and the response from the Party concerned were made available on the Committee's website.³ In the course of preparing the synthesis report and considering the issue of national PRTRs in the European Union member States, the Committee also decided to include respective considerations and address the issue in the 2021 synthesis report.⁴

5. The Committee has not, to date, received any submissions by Parties concerning compliance by other Parties, or any submissions by Parties concerning their own compliance. Neither has it received any referrals by the secretariat. The Committee received one communication from the public regarding compliance with the Protocol, which is available on the Committee's website.⁵

6. The work under the Protocol's compliance mechanism is relevant for the achievement of objectives I.1 and I.3–I.6 under focal area I and for all the objectives of focal area III of the strategic plan for 2015–2020.

B. Technical assistance

7. Technical assistance activities may involve specific projects in countries requiring assistance, including training workshops, guidance materials and expert assistance related to PRTRs. Such assistance is mainly relevant for the achievement of focal areas I and II of the strategic plan for 2015–2020. At the request of Tajikistan, the secretariat engaged consultants to assist the country in reviewing its legal framework vis-à-vis the Protocol's requirements.

1. Workshops and country-specific projects

8. The secretariat promoted the Protocol on PRTRs at the second and third meetings of the Steering Committee and Final Lessons Learned Workshop for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Global Project on the Implementation of Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers as a tool for Persistent Organic Pollutants reporting, dissemination and awareness-raising (Lima, 5–8 March 2018, and Siem Reap, Cambodia, 25–27 March 2019 respectively),⁶ and at the UNITAR workshop on Strengthening Capacities for Developing a National Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) in Support of [Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management] Implementation in Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar, 26 and 27 June 2018).⁷ Bilateral consultations with relevant Mongolian authorities and experts were held on the margins of the latter workshop on 25 June 2018.

9. Furthermore, the secretariat promoted the Protocol and built the capacity of relevant experts at a workshop organized by the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean (MAP Phase II)⁸ as a part of the Regional Meeting on Reporting of Releases to Marine and Coastal Environment from Land-based Sources and Activities and Related Indicators (Tirana, 19 and 20 March 2019).⁹ The secretariat also held bilateral consultations regarding the development of PRTR systems and possible accession to the Protocol with experts from countries of the Mediterranean region, including Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, on the margins of the above-mentioned UNEP/MAP Phase II workshop, and with Tajikistan, on the margins of the twenty-third meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (Geneva, 26–28 June 2019).

³ See <https://unece.org/env/pp/protocol-on-prtrs/protocol-bodies/cc/correspondence>.

⁴ ECE/MP.PRTR/C.1/2021/2, para. 11.

⁵ See <https://unece.org/env/pp/protocol-on-prtrs/cc/communications-from-the-public>.

⁶ See <https://prtr.unitar.org/site/project/1246>.

⁷ See <https://prtr.unitar.org/site/project/1400>.

⁸ See <https://www.unep.org/unepmap/>.

⁹ Meeting report (UNEP/MED WG.462/8). Available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/27450>.

10. At the seventh meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs (Geneva, 28 and 29 November 2019) dedicated sessions were held on the development of the Protocol and on subregional and national activities: needs and challenges for capacity-building. Examples of modernization of PRTRs were shared by the European Union, Sweden and Serbia. Representatives of Georgia, Kazakhstan, Morocco, North Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova shared their countries' achievements in establishing PRTRs and outlined several remaining challenges. The representatives of the European Environment Agency, UNITAR and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) presented opportunities for capacity-building, including through a variety of general and specific guidance materials. Furthermore, the Chair of the International PRTR Coordinating Group presented an updated map¹⁰ illustrating the development of PRTRs around the world and stressed the importance of coordinating PRTR activities at the global level, including through greater leverage of existing online sources of PRTR-related information, such as PRTR.net.

11. Similar sessions were held at the eighth meeting of the Working Group (Geneva, 16 and 18 December 2020). The European Union, Spain and the secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury showcased ways to optimize existing PRTRs and to design new PRTRs to achieve coherent and integrated systems in an efficient manner. Representatives of Albania, Belarus, Colombia, Tajikistan and Turkey shared their countries' achievements in establishing PRTRs and outlined several remaining challenges. Representatives of UNEP/MAP and the Minamata Convention secretariat presented opportunities for capacity-building, including through a variety of general and specific guidance materials and financial mechanisms and projects. In that regard, the representatives referred to methodologies for reporting requirements similar to those under PRTRs and to several expert groups and bodies that, for example, prepare guidance and other capacity-building materials, including on estimation techniques for releases from agriculture, aquaculture or catchment run-off, and on releases and emissions of mercury to environmental media. The representatives of OECD and UNITAR presented their PRTR-related activities, including the development of guidance material and other activities in support of countries developing PRTRs. Furthermore, the Chair of the International PRTR Coordinating Group presented an updated map¹¹ illustrating the development of PRTRs around the world and stressed the importance of coordinating PRTR activities at the global level, including through greater leverage of existing online sources of PRTR-related information, such as PRTR.net. A similar session is planned for the ninth meeting of the Working Group.

2. Technical assistance through electronic tools

12. The secretariat has continued to manage the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy¹² and PRTR.net,¹³ a global portal used to facilitate the collection, dissemination and exchange of information related to PRTRs. The secretariat maintained and updated PRTR.net in cooperation with UNITAR and OECD, and continues to pursue close cooperation with UNITAR in order to ensure the effective use of PRTR.net and PRTR:Learn¹⁴ by national focal points and stakeholders. The secretariat completed the upgrade of PRTR.net to ensure its compliance with security standards and to improve its functionality and content.

13. The secretariat also continues to manage a database on capacity-building activities, which provides information on past, ongoing and future PRTR capacity-building activities.¹⁵

¹⁰ Available under "Presentations" tab at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/seventh-meeting-working-group-parties-protocol-prtrs>.

¹¹ Available under "Presentations" tab at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/eighth-meeting-working-group-parties-protocol-prtrs>.

¹² See <https://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/>.

¹³ See <https://prtr.unece.org>.

¹⁴ See <https://prtr.unitar.org/>.

¹⁵ See <https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation/prtrs-capacity-building>.

14. The Protocol section of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)¹⁶ website was regularly updated during the intersessional period. In addition, section D below includes information regarding the online reporting tool.

3. Thematic surveys

15. During the reporting period, the secretariat carried out a survey among national focal points on progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020, in order to provide an overview in that regard. The results of the survey were made available in a document (PRTR/WG.1/2018/Inf.1)¹⁷ and the outcomes of the survey were used in preparing the documents for the sixth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol (Geneva, 9 November 2018) on, respectively, progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/5) and development of the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/6).

16. Pursuant to a request regarding the development of the Protocol made by the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol at its sixth meeting,¹⁸ the Bureau agreed to hold consultations in order to gather possible suggestions from Parties, other interested States and any interested stakeholders with a view to drawing up a report:

(a) Reviewing the reporting requirements under the Protocol as referred to in article 6 (2) of the Protocol, including possible revisions of annexes I and II, taking into account recent developments in relevant international processes;

(b) Identifying possible gaps and examples of imprecise wording of other provisions of the Protocol, with regard to which Parties faced implementation challenges.¹⁹

17. The secretariat assisted the Bureau in carrying out those consultations. The comments received through the consultations were considered by the Bureau when preparing its report on the subject (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2019/6) to the Working Group for its seventh meeting.

18. Pursuant to a request regarding the development of the Protocol made by the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol at its seventh meeting,²⁰ the secretariat assisted the Bureau in carrying out an exchange on the experiences in implementing the Protocol in the form of a survey among Parties and stakeholders. The outcomes of the survey were used to prepare 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) by the Bureau for the eighth meeting of the Working Group.

C. Information exchange on a technical level

19. The objective of information exchange on a technical level is to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the Protocol. The method of work for information exchange consists of: meetings of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol; ad hoc meetings; and the use of electronic tools. Information exchange on a technical level is relevant for the achievement of all three focal areas of the strategic plan and, specifically, for the achievement of objectives I.1–I.2, II.1, II.3 and III.1.

20. In addition, section B above and section E below describe training workshops, surveys, subregional workshops, electronic tools and other activities and elements that enable information exchange on a technical level. Sections D and F below include information on the reporting mechanism and the meetings of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol.

¹⁶ See www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.html.

¹⁷ Available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/sixth-meeting-working-group-parties-protocol-prtrs>.

¹⁸ ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/2, paras. 27 and 28.

¹⁹ Report on the fourteenth meeting of the Bureau, para. 2, available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/bureau-protocol-prtrs-14th-meeting>.

²⁰ ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2019/2, para. 37 (d) (i).

D. Reporting mechanism

21. The objective of the reporting mechanism is to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the Protocol, the review of compliance and the exchange of experience. The method of work consists of: meetings of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol; the use of the online national implementation reports database; preparation and processing of national implementation reports; analysis of reports and preparation of a synthesis report. This work programme activity is relevant for the achievement of focal area I of the strategic plan.

22. Parties were requested to use the online reporting tool for the submission of national implementation reports for the 2021 reporting cycle.²¹

23. Following the failure of Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia and Ukraine to submit their national implementation reports for the 2017 reporting cycle before the third session of the Meeting of the Parties (Budva, Montenegro, 15 September 2017), those Parties were called on to report by 15 November 2017.²² As at 1 July 2021, Slovenia had submitted the report for the 2021 reporting cycle, but had not submitted its report for the 2014 and 2017 reporting cycles.

E. Awareness-raising and promotion of the Protocol and its interlinkages with other treaties and processes

24. The objective of awareness-raising and promotion of the Protocol and its interlinkages with other treaties and processes is to: (a) expand knowledge of the Protocol throughout the ECE region and beyond; (b) increase the number of Parties to the Protocol; and (c) further the application of the Protocol in the context of other multilateral environmental agreements and related processes (for example, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) under the International Conference on Chemicals Management). The activity is pursued through: participation in key regional and international events and processes; the provision of support to workshops organized by others; the preparation of leaflets, publications, news bulletins and other materials on the Protocol; updating the website; and writing and reviewing articles on the Protocol. This work programme activity is relevant for the achievement of all three focal areas of the strategic plan, and specifically for the achievement of objectives I.1, II.2–II.4 and III.1.

25. During the thirty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council (Geneva, 26 February–23 March 2018), the secretariat promoted the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on several occasions: (a) on 2 March 2018, at a side event regarding children's rights and the environment organized by the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment; (b) on 5 March 2018, during the plenary discussion on the promotion and protection of all human rights and civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development; (c) on 5 March 2018, at a side event organized by the non-governmental organization (NGO) Earthjustice on the protection of environmental human rights defenders; (d) on 6 March 2018, at the launch of the UNEP Environmental Rights Initiative.

26. In response to a call by the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, in October 2018, the secretariat provided input to the Special Rapporteur's report on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.²³

27. In response to a call for comments by the open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human

²¹ See www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/public-participation/protocol-on-prtrs/areas-of-work/implementation-and-compliance/envppprtrreporting/2021-reporting-cycle.html.

²² ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6, para. 31 (d).

²³ See A/HRC/40/55, available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/40/55>.

rights,²⁴ in March 2019, the secretariat prepared and submitted comments on the zero draft of a legally binding instrument regulating, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

28. Furthermore, to build synergies and enhance coordination with partners, the secretariat serviced the eleventh meeting of the Capacity-building Coordination Framework under the Aarhus Convention (Geneva, 9 October 2018). The meeting focused on discussing potential cooperation as a part of existing and future capacity-building activities under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs in the light of the decisions of the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and to the Protocol adopted at the latest sessions (Budva, Montenegro, 11–15 September 2017) and the ongoing in-depth review of progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16 carried out under the auspices of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

29. The secretariat organized a round table on the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development Goal 16, held on the margins of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region (Geneva, 21 and 22 March 2019). The round table highlighted the role of the Convention and the Protocol in achieving Goal 16. The event was organized in cooperation with UNEP, the International Telecommunication Union and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe.

30. The third Global Round Table on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Geneva, 7 and 8 November 2018) was held under the auspices of ECE and OECD and in cooperation with UNITAR and UNEP. It was co-chaired by the Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol and the Chair of the OECD Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. The Global Round Table fostered exchange between Governments and different stakeholders on PRTR-related issues. The presentations and discussions during the event were centred on good practices, common challenges and new opportunities related to the further development of PRTRs.

31. The secretariat promoted the Protocol through various reports and articles prepared under the auspices of ECE and partner organizations, including the *Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) Assessment for the pan-European Region*; encouraged synergies within the Multilateral Environmental Agreements Information and Knowledge Management Initiative, coordinated by UNEP; and took part in related meetings. The secretariat also contributed drafts of the forthcoming Nicosia Assessment. The main objective of this limited indicator-based and thematic assessment is to provide decision-makers with adequate information to take informed policy decisions at the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022), both on broader environmental issues and trends and on the two conference themes on: (a) “Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure”; and (b) “Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism”, in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.²⁵

32. During the reporting period, upon request, the secretariat also provided ongoing advisory support, including by engaging relevant experts, to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean regarding the negotiation of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, which also addresses the issue of PRTRs.

33. The secretariat promoted the Protocol through the activities under the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals²⁶ and various reports and articles prepared under the auspices of ECE and partner organizations. This included contributing a text box on PRTRs as a possible means of implementing many of the recommendation made in the report entitled *Measuring Progress: Towards monitoring the*

²⁴ Established through Human Rights Council resolution 26/9 on the elaboration of an internationally legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights (A/HRC/RES/26/9).

²⁵ See <https://unece.org/pan-european-assessment>.

²⁶ See www.who.int/iomc/en/.

environmental dimension of the SDGs,²⁷ a derivative product of the *Global Environment Outlook – GEO-6: Healthy Planet, Healthy People*,²⁸ which was submitted to the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (Nairobi, 11–15 March 2019). In addition, the secretariat promoted synergy within the Multilateral Environmental Agreement Information and Knowledge Management Initiative coordinated by UNEP and took part in relevant meetings.

34. The secretariat also provided comments on documents related to SAICM, in particular a note by the secretariat to SAICM, which outlines an approach to creating, identifying, documenting, strengthening and disseminating knowledge-intensive activities,²⁹ and a paper by the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.³⁰

35. Moreover, the secretariat carried out this work programme activity through the participation of, or arranging for the participation of, representatives of Convention and Protocol bodies at a number of relevant workshops and other events in various countries. Notably, the secretariat promoted the work under the Protocol and its interlinkages with other treaties and processes, among others, at the following events:

(a) The third and fourth meetings of the OECD Working Party on PRTRs (Paris, 16 and 17 October 2019, and 28 and 29 January 2021, respectively);

(b) The fifty-third, fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth meetings of the Inter-Organization Coordinating Committee under the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (Geneva, 21 and 22 April 2020, 8 and 9 October 2020, and 11 and 12 May 2021, respectively);

(c) The fifth, sixth and seventh Inter-agency Meetings on Sound Chemicals Management (Geneva, 18 October 2019, 25 March 2021, and 29 June 2021, respectively), organized by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals to facilitate exchange of experience between agencies and organizations and to consider collaboration in the context of the SAICM intersessional process, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAICM beyond 2020 process;

(d) Several meetings of the Group of Technical Experts on Mercury Releases under the Minamata Convention on Mercury;

(e) Several online meetings of the Virtual Working Groups (2020/2021) on Targets, indicators and milestones (VWG1) and Governance and mechanisms to support implementation (VWG2) under the intersessional process considering the Strategic Approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.³¹

36. Furthermore, to build synergies and enhance coordination with partners, the secretariat serviced the twelfth and thirteenth meetings of the International PRTR Coordinating Group (Paris, 15 October 2019, and 27 January 2021, respectively),³² which were held back-to-back with the third and fourth meetings of the OECD Working Party on PRTRs. The next meeting of the Coordinating Group is scheduled to take place in Paris in January 2022.

37. In addition, the secretariat liaised continuously with partner organizations, potential donors and interested countries and stakeholders and handled a number of consultations

²⁷ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (Nairobi, 2019).

²⁸ UNEP (Nairobi, 2019).

²⁹ Strategic approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), SAICM Knowledge Management Strategy, document SAICM/OEWG.3/INF/32.

³⁰ SAICM, document SAICM/OEWG.3/4.

³¹ SAICM/UNEP, Virtual Working Groups - 2020/2021, available at www.saicm.org/Beyond2020/IntersessionalProcess/VirtualWorkingGroups/tabid/8563/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

³² See United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, “International PRTR Coordinating Group”, Meetings and Documents tab (accessed on 1 September 2020). Available at www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/intlclgimages/about.html.

regarding capacity-building activities through electronic means, providing advisory support as required.

38. Some partner organizations discontinued or changed their approach to operations. Notably, the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework³³ was rolled out in 16 countries.³⁴ The Framework can provide an opportunity for multi-partner capacity-building activities related to the Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs in those countries, which will require close cooperation between the governance and environmental clusters of the Framework. The current preparatory work covers the period 2021–2025. It will be crucial for the long-term sustainability of activities that Parties provide support to such an approach to capacity-building.

39. Furthermore, the secretariat contributed information on electronic tools used for Convention and Protocol activities to the annual report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels (A/73/66–E/2018/10, A/74/62–E/2019/6, A/75/62–E/2020/11 and A/76/64–E/2021/11). It also contributed to the UNEP publications *Global Chemicals Outlook II – From Legacies to Innovative Solutions: Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*³⁵ and *Green and Sustainable Chemistry: Framework Manual*.³⁶ The Framework Manual had been developed pursuant to a mandate received from the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP at its fourth session (11–15 March 2019) through resolution 4/8 on sound management of chemicals and waste, which requests UNEP, in cooperation with the member organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, among others, to synthesize the UNEP analysis of best practice in sustainable chemistry into manuals on green chemistry and sustainable chemistry.³⁷ Its main purpose is to facilitate a better understanding and provide guidance to countries and stakeholders relevant for advancing green chemistry and sustainable chemistry.

40. Lastly, during the reporting period, the secretariat continued an enhanced outreach exercise, distributing materials on the Convention and the Protocol to national focal points, Aarhus Centres, NGOs and academic institutions in the ECE region.

F. Coordination and oversight of intersessional activities

41. The coordination and oversight of intersessional activities under the Protocol are carried out at meetings of the Working Group of the Parties, meetings of the Bureau, as necessary, and by consultations among Bureau members using email. This work programme activity is relevant for the achievement of all three focal areas of the strategic plan.

42. The secretariat serviced the sixth, seventh and eighth meetings of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol (Geneva, 9 November 2018, 28 and 29 November 2019, and 16 and 18 December 2020, respectively) and the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth meetings of the Bureau (Gothenburg, Sweden, 23 and 24 May 2018, Geneva, 9 November 2018, and Geneva, 22 and 23 May 2019, 29 November 2019, 16 June 2020, 19 November 2020, 17 December 2020 and 29 June 2021, respectively),³⁸ as well as coordinating a number of email consultations and a teleconference (9 January 2020) among the Bureau members.

³³ See <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/cooperation-framework>.

³⁴ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

³⁵ UNEP (Nairobi, 2019). Available at www.unep.org/resources/report/global-chemicals-outlook-ii-legacies-innovative-solutions.

³⁶ UNEP (Nairobi, 2020). Available at www.unep.org/resources/report/chemicals-and-waste-reports-unea-5.

³⁷ UNEP/EA.4/Res.8, para. 14 (d). Available at www.unep.org/environmentassembly/proceedings-report-ministerial-declaration-resolutions-and-decisions-unea-4.

³⁸ For more information, see www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr-bureau.html.

43. Representatives of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy and the governing bodies of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements continued to: liaise at informal meetings; exchange information on priorities under the agreements; and identify and discuss possible areas of cooperation and synergy in the light of recent and future key developments in the area of the environment. During the reporting period, the ninth informal meeting was held in Geneva, on 28 January 2019. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, along with the secretariat, participated in the meeting and promoted issues related to the work under the Protocol, in particular the outcomes of the third Global Round Table on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers as a remarkable partnership event between ECE, OECD, UNEP and UNITAR and the work on development of the Protocol.

44. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties also promoted the above-mentioned activities under the Protocol at the twenty-fourth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, 29–31 January 2019).

45. Accession to the Protocol on PRTRs by Kazakhstan on 24 January 2020 and ratification of the Protocol by Italy on 23 November 2020 raised the number of Parties to the instrument. As at 1 July 2021, the Protocol had 38 Parties.

G. Technical assessment of provisions of the Protocol

46. The technical assessment of the provisions of the Protocol involves the drafting of recommendations on technical issues for the Meeting of the Parties, based on the assessment reports. The method of work for this activity includes meetings of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol, electronic consultation and drafting of assessment reports on experience gained in the development of national PRTRs, in line with article 6 (2) of the Protocol. This work programme activity is relevant for the achievement of all three focal areas of the strategic plan, and more specifically objectives I.1–I.6, II.1 and III.1–III.4.

47. At its first meeting (Geneva, 28 and 29 November 2011), the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol agreed that no amendments to the provisions of the Protocol were needed at that time, and that experience needed to be gathered before such a review could take place.³⁹ The 2014 and 2017 synthesis reports on the implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/5 and ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/10, respectively) presented to the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its second session (Maastricht, the Netherlands, 3 and 4 July 2014) and its third session (Budva, Montenegro, 15 September 2017), respectively, and the individual national implementation reports⁴⁰ on which the syntheses were based, provide insight into some of the issues related to the technical assessment of the provisions of the Protocol. In addition, an assessment concerning the implementation of the Protocol's provisions and its strategic plan is provided in the following documents: Systemic issues concerning the implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and recommendations on how to address them (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6/Add.2); Progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/5); and Development of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/6). Pursuant to the decisions of the Protocol's Working Group of the Parties made at its sixth⁴¹ and seventh⁴² meetings in relation to the development of the Protocol, the Bureau has prepared a 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), which addresses the issue of technical assessment of the provisions of the Protocol.

³⁹ ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2011/2, para. 23.

⁴⁰ Available at www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/reporting.html.

⁴¹ See PRTR/WG.1/2018/Inf.5, p. 3. Available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/sixth-meeting-working-group-parties-protocol-prtrs>.

⁴² See PRTR/WG.1/2019/Inf.7, pp. 3–4. Available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/seventh-meeting-working-group-parties-protocol-prtrs>.

H. Horizontal support areas

48. During the period 2018–2021, the objective of horizontal support activities was to provide overall support that covered multiple substantive areas of the work programme, among other things, through secretarial support and staff training. These activities are relevant for the achievement of all focal areas of the strategic plan.
