

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

Bureau

Nineteenth meeting

Online, 17 December 2020

Report of the nineteenth meeting of the Bureau¹

I. Attendance

Bureau members: Ms. Tina Skårman (Sweden, Chair), Ms. Marie-Rose van den Hende (Belgium, Vice-Chair), Ms. Ulrike Schüler (Germany, Vice-Chair), Mr. Alex Radway (European Union), Mr. Roland Ritter (Switzerland) and Ms. Viktoria Kyreieva (Ukraine).
Observers: Ms. Mara Silina (European ECO-Forum).
Apologies: Mr. Nebojsa Redzic (Serbia).

II. Opening and adoption of the agenda

1. The Chair opened the meeting and the Bureau adopted the provisional agenda.

III. Follow up to the outcomes of the eighth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties

2. The Bureau agreed that pursuant to the outcomes of the eighth meeting of the Working Group, the secretariat will proceed with the finalization of draft decisions and other documents for their submission to the fourth session of the Protocol's Meeting of the Parties. The Bureau noted that discussions on the development of the Protocol and on preparations for the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties were held at the eighth meeting in a positive and focused manner, and a proposal of the European Union and its Member States on the development of the Protocol also helped to clarify directions for the future work.

3. Turning to the technical arrangements for the meeting, the Bureau noted that the hybrid format, which was chosen for organising the meeting to comply with different CoViD-19-related restrictions, did not cause major difficulties and the meeting resulted in solid outcomes. However, unpredictability of the quality of internet connection, availability of the required equipment on the participants' side and other technical issues impacted substantive discussions and procedures throughout the meeting.

4. Regarding possible future meetings which could be held in a hybrid or online format, the Bureau recognized that online participation allows participants to avoid spending time and resources for travel and provides opportunity for a wider participation. At the same time, the Bureau agreed that decisions on holding such meetings shall be determined by the meetings' purpose. For example, meetings of expert groups or the Bureau are less challenging to organize in such formats than complex meetings requiring negotiations and decision-making. For the latter, a wider online participation can be complementary to in-person meetings. Also, it was stressed that the required quality of IT infrastructure and, when needed, availability of interpretation for remote participation, are key preconditions for organising meetings in a hybrid or online format. Pursuant to the brief of the secretariat, the Bureau also noted that arranging and servicing complex meetings in a hybrid or online formats require more support by substantive and technical staff rather than in-person meetings. Also, due to limited availability of facilities

¹ This document was not formally edited.

for remote interpretation offered by UNOG, additional resources have to be spent from the Protocol's Trust Fund to cover the required costs.

IV. Next meeting of the Bureau

5. The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting in spring or early summer 2021.