

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

Twenty-second meeting

Hybrid, 9 June 2022

Report of the twenty-second meeting of the Bureau¹

Attendance

Bureau members: Mr. Tone Kvasič (Slovenia, Chair), Mr. Alex Radway (European Union, Vice-Chair), Ms. Enkeleda Shkurta (Albania, Vice-Chair), Mr. Eduard Hlavatý (Czechia), Ms. Teresa Palomar (Spain) and Mr. Bohdan Papusha (Ukraine).

Observers: Mr. Iñigo de Vicente-Mingarro (Spain) and Mr. Christian Schaible (European ECO-Forum).

Apologies: Ms. Marie-Rose van den Hende (Belgium).

I. Opening and adoption of the agenda

1. The Chair opened the meeting, greeted new Bureau members and introduced the Bureau's functions and its role. In that context, he recalled paragraphs 16 and 17 of the report of the 15th meeting of the Bureau (22-23 May 2019).² The Bureau took note of the information provided by the Chair and adopted the provisional agenda for the meeting.

II. Status of ratification of the Protocol

2. The Bureau took note of the report by the secretariat that there were no new ratifications since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties, held in Geneva on 21-22 October 2021.

III. Implementation of the work programme, including financial matters

3. The Bureau took note of the reports by the secretariat on the implementation of the Protocol's work programme and on financial matters, and requested the secretariat to update the reports as required and submit them to the Working Group of the Parties at its ninth meeting.

IV. Development of the Protocol

4. The Chair noted that since the adoption of the Protocol in 2003, Parties have significantly developed their PRTR systems. In parallel, the scope of those international treaties that were essential in defining the Protocol's scope in 2003 also developed further. As a result, a fragmentation of the approaches and speed in PRTR development as chosen by individual Parties was observed through 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).³ The report also addresses opportunities, threats and the way forward linked to those changes and contains all the key elements for the development of the Protocol. Decision IV/2 on Development of the Protocol on PRTRs

¹ This document was not formally edited.

² Available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/PRTR%20Bureau/PRTR-Bureau-15_meeting_report.pdf.

³ Available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/prtr/WGP-8/ODS/ECE_MP.PRTR_WG.1_2020_4_E.pdf.

(ECE/MP.PRTR/2021/6/Add.1)⁴, tasks the Working Group of the Parties, assisted by the Bureau, with e.g. facilitating an exchange of information between Parties, taking into account inputs from interested stakeholders, and foresees possible proposals by Parties on amendments to the Protocol.

5. The Chair, pursuant to decision IV/2 on Development of the Protocol, invited the Bureau to discuss ways to facilitate an exchange of information between Parties and stakeholders on topics related to future PRTR development and possible options for ensuring that the Protocol's objectives are better met. The Chair suggested to structure the discussion around the following topics: (a) major developments since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties and (b) possible actions to follow up on the decision IV/2, e.g. aimed at keeping PRTRs relevant and comprehensive; harmonizing existing work by Parties and responding to current policy goals, such as the transformation to a sustainable and circular economy and substantially reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollutant releases; promoting PRTRs outside the UNECE region and renewing political support for PRTRs.

6. After the Chair's introduction to the item, a tour de table on developments since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties, began with a presentation by Mr. Radway on the European Union's Commission proposal for the development of the E-PRTR.⁵ The proposal was aimed at the improved alignment of the E-PRTR and the European Industrial Emissions Directive and other associated directives. It also included updating any reporting requirements so that they better reflect the current information needs in the context of economic transformation towards circularity and sustainability and related policy reforms.

7. In the subsequent discussion, several aspects of the Protocol's implementation were raised, mainly concerning comparability, confidentiality, transparency, national needs, historic development of the existing PRTR systems and the above-mentioned current policy goals. For instance, it was noted that PRTR data should enable comparison of data from different facilities, as this was a key purpose of PRTRs. Today, comparability in many PRTR systems was still limited, as for example a large facility was perceived as releasing more pollutants than a small low-tech production site, albeit polluting less per production volume.

8. The challenge of making pollutant release and transfer data comparable also touched upon aspects linked to the question of how PRTRs can effectively contribute to a circular economy. With the proposed and partly implemented changes for the European PRTR, such as adding reporting requirements on resource consumption and production volume, data comparability would be improved and usefulness for circular economy purposes would increase.

9. Turning to issues related to awareness about PRTRs and in particular their scope, it was explained that the name change from E-PRTR to *Industrial Emissions Portal* was motivated by the difficulty for non-experts to engage with the acronym "PRTR". It was argued however that the new name implied a dissemination of pollutant release data limited to industrial emissions, while the Protocol had provisions concerning releases into the environment as a result of any human activity, including from diffuse sources such as from products.

10. Complementing the above, it was noted that the new Portal also covered more than what was understood as being PRTR-related reporting under the Protocol on PRTRs. The name change effectively reflected the historic development of PRTR in the European Union,⁶ and the integration and harmonization of the existing different European legislation linked to industrial

⁴ Available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/ECE_MP.PRTR_2021_6_Add.1_E.pdf.

⁵ See the following content related to the proposal: [Press release](#), [Factsheet](#), [Questions and Answers on Revised EU rules on Industrial Emissions](#), [Proposal for Industrial Emissions Directive](#), [Proposal for Industrial Emissions Portal regulation](#).

⁶ See Guidance on Implementation of the Protocol on PRTRs ECE/MP.PP/7, p.3 and 4, available at [PRTR May 2008 for CD.pdf \(unece.org\)](#).

pollutant releases and permit requirements, as well as the Seveso III Directive 2012/18/EU on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances.

11. In addition, it was noted that the name change was indeed a complex issue which would also warrant reflection in the context of the name of the Protocol on PRTRs and the associated Portals. Technical solutions, as for instance regarding the structure of how PRTR related information is disseminated through one or multiple portals, could possibly address such issues to some extent. For example a “Pollution Prevention Portal” could include not only industrial emissions information, but also direct to the information related to pollution prevention and reduction (see Art.1 of the Protocol) and on releases from small and scattered point sources, as a core element of PRTRs (Art.4(b) of the Protocol)⁷ and including data on releases from products as addressed in some PRTRs and also in the OECD resource compendium of PRTR⁸ Part 4 on Releases of Chemicals from Products⁹ and on releases from Products.¹⁰

12. The Bureau then considered voluntary measures that could support efforts by Parties for PRTRs to stay relevant and comprehensive, as well as to harmonize the existing work by Parties and respond to above-mentioned current policy goals. During the discussion the Bureau also considered possible effects a further development of the Protocol may have on the Protocol’s ratification for some countries. It was stressed that the above measures were voluntary with no legal obligation for Parties. Furthermore, countries interested in joining the Protocol primarily showed an interest in its usefulness as a tool that addresses current policy goals and challenges in the context of reporting and data dissemination and related environmental management challenges. Thus, any measures aimed at increasing efficiency and coherence of the Protocol would likely support its ratification and promotion globally.¹¹

13. Other developments since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties, included Resolution 5/14 entitled “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument” (UNEP/EA.5/Res.14)¹², adopted on 2 March 2022 by the United Nations Environmental Assembly at its fifth session. In this regard, the Bureau noted the overlap between the scope of the Protocol on PRTRs and the scope of a possible future instrument to end plastic pollution inferring potential synergy.

14. To that end, the Bureau:

(a) agreed to prepare a note to guide the discussion on development of the Protocol at the ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties and requested the secretariat to submit it to that meeting;

(b) requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau: (i) to update existing lists with substances and thresholds regulated under other relevant treaties, regulations and activities,¹³ in cooperation with respective organizations, for possible sharing them through PRTR.net and the Protocol’s webpage; and (ii) to prepare a note on the possible linkages between PRTRs and

⁷ See Guidance on Implementation of the Protocol on PRTRs ECE/MP.PP/7, p.22 and 63, available at [PRTR_May_2008_for_CD.pdf \(unece.org\)](http://www.unece.org/DocumentDisplay.aspx?docid=8242).

⁸ Publications in the series on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers are available at [Publications in the series on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers - OECD](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=env/jm/mono(2017)2&doclanguage=en) and guidance manuals and documents on release estimation techniques [Resource Centre for Pollutant Release and Transfer Registrants Release Estimation Techniques - OECD](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=env/jm/mono(2017)2&doclanguage=en).

⁹ Available at [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=env/jm/mono\(2017\)2&doclanguage=en](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=env/jm/mono(2017)2&doclanguage=en).

¹⁰ Available at

[http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=env/jm/mono\(2017\)2/ann&doclanguage=en](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=env/jm/mono(2017)2/ann&doclanguage=en).

¹¹ See also the report of the 15th meeting of the Bureau, held on 22-23 May 2019 (para. 2).

¹² Available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39764/END%20PLASTIC%20POLLUTION%20-%20TOWARDS%20AN%20INTERNATIONAL%20LEGALLY%20BINDING%20INSTRUMENT%20-%20English.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

¹³ See the Comparative analysis of different international reporting obligations related to annexes I, II and III of the Protocol on PRTRs (PRTR/WG.1/2019/Inf.2).

plastic pollution, taking into consideration also experiences in countries and under relevant organizations;

(c) encouraged Parties that have elaborated methodology on a specific aspect of PRTR development (e.g. with a focus on examples showcasing approaches for putting PRTR data to use), to explore possibilities to take a lead on a specific topic of PRTR development¹⁴ and share experience with Parties and stakeholders through PRTR.net and at the meetings of the Working Group of the Parties and other events;

(d) encouraged Protocol's national focal points to promote, in cooperation with national focal points of other relevant treaties and organizations, the financial support, such as through the Global Environment Facility (GEF),¹⁵ to countries that wish to establish PRTR systems of their own or as a group;

(e) encouraged Protocol's national focal points to engage with national focal points of other relevant instruments and to jointly promote the use of PRTRs for reporting on international agreements, recalling in that context Sustainable Development Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production; the related OECD activities;¹⁶ the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol)¹⁷ to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and the LBS Protocol's Amendment¹⁸; the PRTR-related provisions of the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)¹⁹ and of the 2013 Minamata Convention on Mercury²⁰; and the future treaty to end plastic pollution;

(f) encouraged Protocol's Parties to consider promoting the inclusion of provisions on PRTRs also in relevant future treaties, including the treaty to end plastic pollution, thereby promoting synergy and avoiding duplication of work.

V. Preparations for the ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties

15. The Bureau considered and approved a provisional agenda for the ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Geneva, 24-25 November 2022) and requested the secretariat to finalise it in consultation with the Chair and submit it to the Working Group of the Parties at its ninth meeting.

16. The Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat that Lithuania and Montenegro had submitted their national implementation reports and, with this, all Parties had

¹⁴ For an unexhaustive list of possible topic categories, see e.g., the respective chapters 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), available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/prtr/WGP-8/ODS/ECE_MP.PRTR_WG.1_2020_4_E.pdf.

¹⁵ See <https://www.thegef.org/who-we-are/funding>.

¹⁶ OECD (2021), Using PRTR Information to Evaluate Progress Towards the Sustainable Development Goal 12, OECD Series on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, No. 25, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/pollutant-release-transfer-register/using-prtr-information-evaluate-progress-towards-sustainable-development-goal-12.pdf>.

¹⁷ See https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35685/80ig19_finalact_efas_lbs_eng.pdf.

¹⁸ See https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/6%20Minamata_20201216_UNECE_PRTR_Minamata.pdf.

¹⁹ The Stockholm Convention (SC) on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) requires parties to exchange information (article 9), facilitate public information, awareness and education (Article 10) report to the Secretariat (Article 15) and periodically update implementation plans (Article 7). Article 10 explicitly acknowledges the value of Pollutant Release and Transfers Registers (PRTRs) for the collection and dissemination of information on estimates of the annual quantities of the chemicals listed in Annex A, B or C that are released or disposed of, and Article 11 encourages parties to undertake appropriate monitoring pertaining to POPs.

²⁰ See https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/6%20Minamata_20201216_UNECE_PRTR_Minamata.pdf.

submitted their national implementation reports for the 2021 reporting cycle. The secretariat will report the status of the submission to the Working Group accordingly.

VI. Other relevant developments, including with regard to the fourth Global round table on PRTRs

17. The Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat that the secretariat, in cooperation with OECD, had planned for the 4th Global round table on PRTRs to be held back-to-back with the ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties. However, the originally planned date was not feasible for some OECD Member States. The secretariat in cooperation with OECD will explore opportunities to hold the meeting in 2024, as in 2023 the secretariat already planned a global event under the Aarhus Convention and lacks the capacity to hold two such events in the same year.

VII. Closing

18. The Chair thanked the participants for their active participation and fruitful discussion and closed the meeting.

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