

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Working Group of the Parties

Ninth meeting

Geneva, 24 and 25 November 2022

DECISIONS AND MAJOR OUTCOMES¹

as adopted by the Working Group at its ninth 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 the agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/1 and agreed to consider calendar of the meetings under item on “other business”.

Item 2. Status of ratification of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the information provided by the secretariat;
- ii) encouraged Signatories and other interested States to proceed with accession to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) as soon as possible.

Item 3. Promotion and coordination

(a) Coordination mechanisms and synergies

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the report by the Chair of the International PRTR Coordinating Group and welcomed the Group’s important role for promoting awareness of PRTRs and synergy and coordination on this important topic at global level;
- ii) took note of the information provided by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and the Republic of Moldova speaking on behalf of the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Information under the Aarhus Convention;
- iii) expressed appreciation to the speakers and other partner organizations for support provided to furthering synergy and implementation of PRTR systems thereby strengthening countries’ capacities to accede to the Protocol on PRTRs;

¹ This document was not formally edited.

iv) called upon relevant partner organisations and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to cooperate closely where possible to create synergies to further the implementation of the activities related to PRTRs;

v) reiterated its call upon governments to strengthen cooperation between experts dealing with the Protocol on PRTRs and those dealing with the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), 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 (Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the Minamata Convention on Mercury), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other relevant agreements and programmes, as well as involved in projects carried out by international organisations as to ensure coordination at national level;

vi) reiterated its call upon Parties and stakeholders to consider implementation of the Protocol and Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in synergy.

(b) Global promotion of the Protocol

The Working Group:

i) took note of the information presented by UNEP, the secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and expressed its appreciation to presenters for sharing valuable experiences;

ii) requested the Bureau with the support of the secretariat to explore opportunities for future cooperation with other treaties and processes, including on the preparation of the Comparative analysis of different international reporting obligations related to annexes I, II and III to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers;

iii) 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;

iv) reiterated its call upon the secretariat and interested States to translate the text of the Protocol in other United Nations official languages;

v) reiterated its call on Parties, other interested countries and organizations to promote PRTRs as a reporting tool for MEAs dealing with chemicals and for other relevant MEAs;

vi) encouraged in this regard the 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 and processes, recalling in that context Sustainable Development Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production; the related OECD activities; the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol) to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and the LBS Protocol's Amendment; the

PRTR-related provisions of the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and of the 2013 Minamata Convention on Mercury; and the future treaty to end plastic pollution;

vii) encouraged Protocol's Parties to consider promoting the inclusion of provisions on PRTRs also in relevant future treaties, including a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment,¹ thereby promoting synergy and avoiding duplication of work.

Item 4: Compliance and reporting mechanisms

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the information provided by the Chair on the 2021 reporting cycle;
- ii) welcomed the fact that all Parties to the Protocol have submitted their national implementation report for the 2021 reporting cycle to the secretariat;
- iii) took note of the Reports of the Compliance Committee on its eleventh and twelfth meetings (ECE/MP.PRTR/C.1/2021/6; ECE/MP.PRTR/C.1/2022/2);
- iv) took note of the statements by participants.

Item 5. Programme of work and operation of the Protocol

(a) Implementation of the work programmes for 2018–2021 and 2022–2025, including financial matters

The Working Group:

- i) took note of the Report on implementation of the work programmes of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for 2018–2021 and 2022–2025 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/3);
- 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 and 2022–2025 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/4) as well as information on contributions received between 15 September and 10 November 2022 provided by the secretariat;
- iii) took note of the interventions: (a) by Georgia noting that its contribution for 2022 (for the Aarhus Convention (1,000 USD) and for the Protocol on PRTRs (1,000 USD) was missing in the report and (b) by the secretariat, clarifying that the issue will be verified and addressed in the meeting's report;
- iv) expressed appreciation for the work done by the secretariat and recognizes the difficulties posed by limited and unpredictable funding;
- v) expressed its concern with regard to low number of pledges;

¹ For information on negotiations related to resolution UNEA 5/14 entitled "End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument", see <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/inc-plastic-pollution>.

vi) 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.

(b) Development of the Protocol

The Working Group:

On the sub-item “Towards modern pollutant release and transfer register systems”

i) took note of the examples presented by the European Union, Israel, Serbia, United Kingdom and European Environmental Bureau (EEB)/European ECO Forum and expressed its appreciation to presenters for sharing valuable experiences;

ii) took note of the information provided by participants;

iii) recognised the importance of modernising pollutant release and transfer register systems;

iv) recognized 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 Note to guide the discussion on the development of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/5), and the voluntary measures to support implementation of decision IV/2 it includes along with those suggested in subsection II.D (Way forward) of the Report on the outcomes of the survey on the experiences in implementing the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/4);

vi) encouraged Parties that have elaborated methodology on a specific aspect of PRTR development, to explore possibilities to take a lead on a specific topic of PRTR development and share experience with Parties and stakeholders through PRTR.net, bilaterally and at the meetings of the Working Group of the Parties and other events.

On the sub-item “Possible linkages to plastic pollution and related efforts”

vii) took note of the examples presented by the secretariat of the UNEP MAP, United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) and EEB /European ECO Forum, and expressed its appreciation to presenters for sharing valuable experiences;

viii) took note of the information provided by participants;

ix) took note of the Note on possible linkages between pollutant release and transfer registers and plastic pollution (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/6) and in that context encouraged Protocol's national focal points to:

- o liaise on the issues raised in the Note with their counterpart national focal points involved in the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

- o promote the Protocol's requirements and the replication of PRTRs in the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

- o analyse how the existing national/regional PRTR reporting from production facilities and dissemination infrastructures could be made fit for managing data on plastic pollution specifically.

o share experience on pollutant release data collection and dissemination, including the application of release estimation techniques, relevant to inform and shape reporting and dissemination tools under a future legally binding instrument on plastic pollution and in particular where data from measurements and calculations may be difficult to obtain.

x) requested the Bureau with the support of the secretariat to explore opportunities for cooperation with UN/CEFACT.

Item 6. Fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol

The Working Group:

i) took note of information shared by the secretariat regarding related outcomes of the twenty-sixth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (Geneva, 22–23 June 2022);

ii) called on Parties potentially open to hosting the fifth session to inform the secretariat of their interest in that regard, taking into consideration the fact that the fifth session would be organized back-to-back with the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, and mandated the secretariat to liaise with potentially interested Parties in that regard;

iii) mandated the Bureau to take the decision on the hosting and timing of the fifth session prior to the next meeting of the Working Group, as appropriate, and to report to the Working Group on the issue at its next meeting.

Item 7. Subregional and national activities: achievements, needs and challenges for capacity building

The Working Group:

i) took note of the examples presented by Argentina, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Ukraine, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Institute for Training and Research and Guta Association of Environmental Law/European ECO Forum, and expressed its appreciation to presenters for sharing valuable experiences;

ii) took note of the information provided by other participants;

iii) thanked partner organizations for their important work in providing opportunities for capacity building;

iv) welcomed efforts by countries and organizations to promote 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;

vi) 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), to countries that wish to establish PRTR systems of their own or as a group.

Item 8. Other business

The Working Group took note of the tentative schedule of relevant meetings planned for 2023.

Item 9. Adoption of decisions and outcomes of the meeting

The Working Group took note of the statements by delegations, and adopted the major outcomes and decisions presented by the Chair at the meeting and requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, to finalize the report and to incorporate the adopted outcomes and decisions in it.
