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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Ninth meeting of the Working Group 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 (PRTR WGP 9) (Geneva, 24-25 November 2022) - Statements by the EU and its Member States

Delegations will find in the Annex, for information, a compilation of statements by the EU and its Member States delivered during the ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs (WGP 9).

**Ninth meeting of the Working Group 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
(PRTR WGP 9)
(Geneva, 24-25 November 2022)**

- Statements by the EU and its Member States

Agenda item 1: Adoption of the agenda

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues, I have the pleasure to take the floor on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Since this is our first intervention at this meeting, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Secretariat for the timely submission of comprehensive meeting documents. We would also like to thank the Chair for his introductory statement and for inviting the WGP to adopt the agenda of that meeting.

The EU and its Member States would like to propose an amendment to the meeting agenda consisting in the incorporation of an item relating to the tentative calendar of meetings for 2023. Otherwise I am glad to add that the EU and its Member States can accept the rest of the proposed agenda as it stands

We note that considerable time is set aside for agenda item 5(b) on Development of the Protocol. We consider that this is an important topic and we would like to take this opportunity to inform on current EU work being carried out on the revision of the EU legislation implementing the Protocol. We will have the pleasure to deliver tomorrow a presentation for that purpose.

We look forward to fruitful discussions and exchanges of views and efficient meeting.

Agenda item 2: Status of ratification of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

The EU and its Member States welcome the latest ratifications to the Protocol as they ensure a broader geographic applicability of this important international legal instrument, hence enhancing its status as a significant reporting multilateral environmental instrument. In this respect, the EU and its Member States would also welcome additional ratifications with a view to further reinforcing and harmonising the reporting on industrial emissions.

Agenda item 3: Promotion and coordination

a) Coordination mechanisms and synergies

The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat for its Report on the implementation of the work programme of the Protocol of Pollutant Release and Transfer Register for 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 and for its efforts in implementing the Plan.

The EU and its Member States believe that pursuing synergies with other partner organizations is important and welcome the Secretariat's initiatives to build interlinkages with other treaties and processes.

In this respect, we continue to support PRTR-related coordination activities carried out in particular with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and other organisations. This cooperation opens up new perspectives and is helpful in defining areas for improvement as well as for further development of PRTRs.

b) Global promotion of the Protocol

The EU and its Member States support work to promote the Protocol globally, and in particular, cooperation with the partners and stakeholders concerned such as the OECD and UNITAR. We also welcome the role of the International Coordination Group for PRTRs (ICG), as the Protocol is likely to benefit from a more cross-cutting perspective.

Agenda item 4: Compliance and reporting mechanisms

The EU and its Member States would first like to welcome the newly appointed members of the Compliance Committee, Ms. Iordanov and Ms. Janjatovic, as well as Ms. Weber who replaced Mr. Kroiss for the remainder of the term. We wish them the best of luck and success in their useful work.

The EU and its Member States thank the Compliance Committee and the Secretariat for their continuous support in implementing the Protocol. We support the valuable work of the Compliance Committee and are ready to assist the appointed curators in their task. The EU and its Member States also welcome the information that the Committee has not received any communications regarding non-compliance with the Protocol.

Agenda item 5: Programme of work and operation of the Protocol

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

The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat for the reports on the implementation of the work programme for 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 and on contributions and expenditures.

(b) Development of the Protocol

The EU and its Member States thank the Bureau for preparing the notes to guide the discussion and consider them as a useful contribution.

We welcome the discussion about options to strengthen the implementation of the Protocol and support thorough and constructive reflections on the development of the Protocol, based on an objective assessment of technical and legal facts.

We would like to highlight that we have carried out in the European Union considerable work to assess the E-PRTR system. This assessment has led to a legislative proposal aimed at the revision of the E-PRTR Regulation. This proposal is currently under consideration by the two EU co-legislators, namely the Council and the European Parliament. The legislative process is expected to require some time. We believe that the outcome of this legislative process could also be relevant for the future development of the Protocol and we are committed to inform you on the outcome as soon as possible. In order to give you information of the starting point of the negotiations, we are happy to present to you the legislative proposal for the amendment of the E-PRTR Regulation, which is public.

[The Commission presents the key features of the legislative proposal with the support of a Power Point Presentation]

While we have of course to respect the pace of our legislative process on this proposal, we stand ready to engage in the assessment of proposals made within the working party, without prejudice to future informal and formal negotiations processes that might be agreed upon.

Regarding the note on possible linkages between pollutant release and transfer registers and plastic pollution:

The EU shares the view that monitoring of plastics pollution remains a great challenge in the current times and supports development in this regard.

The EU would like to recall the negotiations for a new legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, mandated by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session in March 2022, with the objective to conclude by the end of 2024. We encourage the Secretariat, as well as the Parties, to follow the negotiations closely and engage in the discussions, particularly on matters relevant for the Protocol to ensure that the international legally binding instruments are fully coherent with and complementary to the Protocol and to ensure that the expertise of the Secretariat and the Parties and the experience built up in implementing the Protocol is fully shared to support the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee will start in a few days, namely on 28 November.

Agenda item 6: Fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties

The EU and its Member States look forward to the next Meeting of the Parties. We expect that by that time we will have finalized the on-going EU-internal legislative process of the revision of the E-PRTR, and will then be able to engage in the discussion on the Protocol's development on the basis of a modernized Industrial Emissions Portal Regulation.

Agenda item 7: Subregional and national activities: achievements, needs and challenges for capacity-building

The EU and its Member States would like to thank all relevant stakeholders, especially the Bureau and the Secretariat for their efforts in promoting and implementing the Protocol.

Regarding sharing experiences in implementing national PRTRs

We would like to take the opportunity to thank the speakers for sharing experiences gained through implementing and developing their pollutant release and transfer registers.

We believe that this gives the Parties a good opportunity to learn how to make use of synergies with other reporting obligations, in order to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of pollutant release and transfer registers.

Regarding capacity building needs

The EU and its Member States want to thank the Secretariat for providing capacity-building to authorities and advisory support to Parties throughout the implementation of the Protocol in different work areas, including with regard to technical assistance, promotion and the compliance mechanism.

Agenda item 9: Adoption of the decision and outcomes of the meeting

The EU and its Member States would like to convey their thanks to the Secretariat for the smooth organisation of this meeting, including in particular for having organised an in-person participation to this meeting. Whereas we are hopeful that we will be able to maintain such physical meetings in the future, we acknowledge also that hybrid or online meetings may prove to be the format that would ensure the participation of all Parties in times of energy and economic crisis. The EU and its Member States would also like to thank the interpreters and all the panellists for their clear and very informative presentations. It undoubtedly shows that progress in the field of PRTR is taking place in many UNECE and other countries, hence further enabling reporting environmental data from relevant activities and public access to those data. Thank you. We wish you all a good and safe journey back home.
