

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-third meeting

Hybrid, 9 June 2023

Report of the twenty-third meeting of the Bureau¹

Attendance

Bureau members: Mr. Tone Kvasič (Slovenia, Chair), Ms. Malgorzata Kicia (European Union, Vice-Chair), Ms. Enkeleda Shkurta (Albania, Vice-Chair), Ms. Marie-Rose van den Hende (Belgium), Mr. Eduard Hlavatý (Czechia), Ms. Luchko Kateryna (Ukraine) and Ms. Teresa Palomar (Spain).

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

I. Opening and adoption of the agenda

1. The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed Ms. Malgorzata Kicia and Ms. Kateryna Luchko as new Bureau members, and introduced the Bureau's functions and its role. In that context, he recalled decision I/1 on Rules of Procedure² and paragraphs 15, 16 and 17 of the report of the fifteenth meeting of the Bureau (22-23 May 2019).³

2. The Bureau welcomed the new members and took note of the information provided by the Chair and by participants. The Bureau then adopted the provisional agenda for the meeting and agreed to consider the issue of public participation in the development of the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (E-PRTR) under the item on "Other business".

II. Status of ratification of the Protocol

3. The Bureau took note of the report by the secretariat noting that there were no new ratifications since the ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Geneva, 24-25 November 2022). The Bureau stressed that it will be important to liaise with Greece on the matter within the upcoming preparations of the European Union for the tenth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Geneva, 27-28 November 2023). The Bureau also requested the secretariat to contact the national focal point of Greece on the matter. Finally, the Bureau took note of the accession of Guinea-Bissau to the Aarhus Convention on 4 April 2023.

III. Development and global promotion of the Protocol

4. Pursuant to decision IV/2 on Development of the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/2021/6/Add.1)⁴, the Bureau considered a proposal for a draft decision that would summarise major commitments taken by the Working Group of the Parties and the Meeting of the Parties as well as several new

¹ This document was not formally edited.

² Available at <https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation/prtrs-mops>

³ Available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/PRTR%20Bureau/PRTR-Bureau-15_meeting_report.pdf.

⁴ Available at <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2022/10/pp-prtrs-mopp4-decision-iv2-development-protocol-pollutant-release>

advances regarding modernisation of PRTRs, their promotion and synergy. The proposal was aimed at helping Parties and other interested Member States and stakeholders to implement possible voluntary measures as to facilitate implementation of decision IV/2. The Bureau noted that it already addressed the above issues in its Note to guide the discussion on development of the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/5) submitted to the ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, which was well received by Parties and stakeholders. The Bureau also noted that it is unlikely that any Party would suggest amendments to the Protocol prior to the next session of the Meeting of the Parties. Therefore, considering rich experience accumulated through the work under the Protocol on improvement of PRTRs and also efforts taken by Parties and stakeholders to promote the Protocol, preparing such decision would be a natural next step.

5. The Bureau agreed that such a decision was indeed needed and helpful and requested the secretariat to revise the proposal in the light of the comments received at the meeting and to send it to the Bureau for possible additional comments with a view to its finalization through electronic decision-making and subsequent submission to the Working Group of the Parties for its consideration.

6. The Bureau took note of the recent developments shared by Ms. Kicia regarding an update on the European Union's Commission proposal for the development of the E-PRTR.

IV. Implementation of the work programme, including financial matters

7. The Bureau took note of the reports by the secretariat on the implementation of the Protocol's work programme and on financial matters. In this regard, the secretariat provided an overview of the major outcomes of a recent Self-evaluation on the activities serviced by UNECE under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs conducted by an independent consultant, which included the following major recommendations relevant for the work under the Protocol: (a) continue to encourage a participatory and a human rights-based approach, synergy and gender considerations; (b) seek ways to strengthen Aarhus Centres; (c) need to allocate adequate budget to address serious lack of resources; (d) strive to ensure that activities conform to the accessibility standards for people with disabilities; and (e) promote importance of evaluations.⁵ The secretariat also informed the Bureau about outcomes of the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (Paris, 29 May - 2 June 2023).

8. The Bureau requested the secretariat to update the reports on the implementation of the Protocol's work programme and on financial matters as required and submit them to the Working Group of the Parties at its tenth meeting (Geneva, 27-28 November 2023).

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

9. The Bureau considered and approved the following documents, requesting the secretariat to finalise the documents in consultation with the Chair, as needed, and submit them to the Working Group of the Parties at its tenth meeting: (a) provisional agenda for the tenth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties; (b) Draft note on the future work programme for the Protocol; and (c) Draft note on the future financial arrangements for the Protocol.

10. On the topic of compliance and reporting mechanisms, the Bureau took note of the report of the latest thirteenth meeting of the Compliance Committee (ECE/MP.PRTR/C.1/2023/2) held in

⁵ Available at https://unece.org/evaluation-reports#accordion_2

Geneva in a hybrid format on 7-8 March 2023⁶ and information provided by the secretariat on requests for advisory support received from Armenia and Ukraine regarding establishment of their PRTR systems.

VI. Preparations for the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties

11. The Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat regarding preparations for the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties, noting that no Party expressed a formal interest to host the session, which is planned to be held in the second part of 2025 back-to-back with the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention.

VII. Calendar of meetings

12. The Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat about the upcoming meetings under the Protocol⁷, noting that 4th Global round table on PRTRs is planned to be held back-to-back with the eleventh meeting of the Working Group of the Parties in November 2024.

VIII. Other business

13. The Bureau took note of the information provided by Mr. Schaible regarding a letter sent by the European Environmental Bureau to the European Commission concerning lack of opportunities for public participation in the development of E-PRTR. The Bureau highlighted in this regard that the Protocol's Compliance Committee is an appropriate body to consider possible communications from the public and provide advice to Parties in line with decision I/2 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/2/Add.1)⁸.

IX. Closing

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

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⁶ Available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/thirteenth-meeting-protocol-prtrs-compliance-committee>

⁷ A calendar of meetings for 2023 is available at <https://unece.org/info/events/unece-meetings-and-events/environmental-policy/public-participation>.

⁸ Available at <https://unece.org/env/pp/protocol-on-prtrs/cc/background-and-members>