



International PRTR Coordinating Group

Eleventh meeting

Thursday, 29 June 2017, New York, United States of America

REPORT¹

1. The meeting of the International Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers Coordinating Group (ICG) was attended by representatives of the following countries and organizations: Chile, Czechia, European Union, Japan, Spain, Sweden, United States of America, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). The meeting was chaired by Mr. Iñigo de Vicente-Mingarro (Spain), and serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

I. Opening and adoption of the agenda

2. The Chair opened the meeting with an introduction to the work of ICG and presented the provisional agenda.² The agenda was then adopted by the participants.

II. PRTR activities

3. The Chair presented the current version of the Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers-global-map³ and invited the ICG participants and other stakeholders to provide the secretariat with possible up-dates to the map. Participants then shared information on planned and existing Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR) activities at the global level, which included:

- Support to individual countries;
- Challenges related to the replacement of outdated PRTR software;
- Work on the identification of priority chemicals with regard to e.g. evaluating potential health risks and databases that cover substances addressed by different multilateral environmental agreements and other agreements and programmes.

4. On the issue of how to improve leverage of the existing online sources of information related to PRTR, including PRTR.net, the OECD resource centre, the OECD data centre the UNITAR and IOMC platforms it was agreed that an additional exercise on how to merge available information with the aim to improve the usefulness of available informative PRTR websites needs to be carried out (see para. 16).

¹ This document was not formally edited.

² Available under <https://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/intlcgimages/about.html>.

³ Available under <https://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/intlcgimages/about.html>.

III. PRTR HOT-TOPICS

A. PRTR as a reporting tool for facilities and its role as an information and learning platform with knowledge on demand and e.g. data from other sources such as health-related information, successful PRTR awareness campaigns and interactive, data visualization options for communicating/presenting PRTR information

5. The participants underlined the continuing importance of the above topics. A representative of the United States of America presented the country's recent developments in visualizing PRTR data through the "Qlik sense" software. The software facilitated the use of data for new uses both internally within the United States Environmental Protection Agency and by external constituencies, e.g. teachers, academic specialists and trade associations. In the discussion that followed the presentation by the United States of America, Spain noted that based on past experience the most important target group to inform regarding the use of PRTR data was journalists. Spain had planned to hold a workshop for journalists with the aim to increase their knowledge in the use of PRTR data. OECD mentioned that to provide contextual information on chemicals, PRTRs could be linked to the eChem Portal⁴ which already made such information available to the public.

B. Scope of PRTRs in the context of new developments with regard to use of chemical substances and further harmonization of different PRTR systems

6. A representative of the United States of America informed the meeting on reductions in the use of chemicals by the industry. He further highlighted the significance of following a harmonized approach when establishing PRTRs. In that context, participants noted the importance of the Protocol on PRTRs with its minimum requirements which are common to all Parties to the Protocol and the OECD Council Act recommendation on implementing pollutant release and transfer registers⁵ with its provision to follow a harmonized approach.

C. PRTRs in the context of other international processes and instruments that support sound chemicals management at national level, e.g. SAICM and UNEP chemicals and wastes MEAs, and a post SAICM goal and the SDGs

7. The participants noted that countries first implement national priorities, also with regard to lists of substances, and thereafter take into account substances listed under related international processes and instruments, including e.g. the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Protocol on PRTRs and the OECD shortlist of chemicals. Spain had prepared a checklist to control whether PRTRs are in compliance with the current OECD Council Act recommendation on implementing pollutant release and transfer registers. Spain offered to share the list with the ICG.

⁴ Available under www.echemportal.org.

⁵ Available under www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/oecdouncilactsrelatedtochemicals.htm.

IV. Future Global Round Table

8. Considering the positive experience with the first and second Global Round Tables held in November 2013 in Geneva, and in November 2015 in Madrid, participants expressed their support to organising again a joint UNECE-OECD Global Round Tables in the future. Participants agreed that in general a periodicity of two years would be good to follow, when planning future round tables.

As possible topics for the next global round table participants identified the following items:

- a) The role of PRTRs in achieving Sustainable Development Goals;
- b) Equivalence between activities, chemicals and thresholds as defined under different PRTR systems;
- c) The role of PRTRs in assessing environmental performance in different sectors of economy, including assessing the environmental impact of industrial green chemistry and other source reduction practices;
- d) Successful communication activities for PRTRs;
- e) Knowledge on demand – based on data visualization;
- f) Emerging PRTRs;
- g) Defining the variety of users and uses of PRTR-systems.

The list was intended to inform related discussions of the Bureaux of the Protocol on PRTRs and of the OECD Working Group on PRTRs.

V. Election of the Chair

9. The Chair introduced the item. The secretariat reported that no new candidates for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair of the ICG were submitted. The current Chair and Vice Chair were unanimously re-elected in accordance with paragraph 11 of the terms of reference of ICG.

VI. Next meeting

10. The secretariat informed participants that the next meeting would be organized considering preparations for the second meeting of the Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers under OECD and a possible third Global Round Table event to take place in 2018.

VII. Outcomes

11. The participants reiterated their commitment to coordination and synergies in relation to the work on PRTRs. They furthermore decided that upcoming meetings will continue discussion on the following topics:

- a) The scope of PRTRs in the context of new developments with regard to use of chemical substances and further harmonization of different PRTR systems and issues of data equivalence;
- b) Good practices for a successful PRTR awareness campaign and interactive, data visualization options for communicating/presenting PRTR information. The United States of America will share experience on the topic during the next meeting.

12. On the issue of how to improve leverage of the existing online PRTR-related websites under the auspices of ECE, OECD and UNITAR, it was agreed that the Chair would prepare a proposal on a possible future architecture of the existing websites (see para. 4 above). The proposal would then be shared for comments among members of ICG in the view of finalizing the proposal for discussion at the next meeting.
