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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

Working Group of the Parties

Ninth meeting
Geneva, 24 and 25 November 2022

Report of the Working Group of the Parties on its ninth meeting

Contents

I. Introduction

1. The ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was held in Geneva, on 24 and 25 November 2022.[1]

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended[2] by delegations from the following Parties to the Protocol: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

3. Representatives of Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia, signatories to the Protocol, attended the meeting.

4. Delegations from Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Guinea-Bissau, Mongolia, Morocco, Türkiye and Uzbekistan also participated.

5. Also in attendance were representatives of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the secretariats of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

6. Representatives of Aarhus Centres and professional organizations were also present, as were representatives of international, regional and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), many of whom coordinated their input within the framework of the European ECO-Forum.

B. Organizational matters

7. Mr. Tone Kvasič (Slovenia), Chair of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol, opened the meeting. He informed the Working Group that, with a view to ensuring equal opportunities for English-, French- and Russian-speaking delegations, the meeting would result in a list of decisions and outcomes that would be distributed by email to meeting participants before the close of the meeting and that would be presented orally by the Chair for adoption, thereby allowing for interpretation. The adopted list of decisions and outcomes would be distributed to participants by email after the meeting and would be incorporated into the meeting report.

8. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the Chair and of statements by participants. The Working Group then adopted the agenda for the meeting as set out in document ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/1 and agreed to consider a calendar of the upcoming meetings under item 8 on “Other business”.

[1] Documents for the meeting and other information, including a list of participants and statements and presentations delivered at the meeting and made available to the secretariat, are uploaded at https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Public-Participation/events/369119.

[2] See list of participants available on the meeting’s web page. Only in-person presence of Parties’ representatives was counted for decision-making.

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

9. The secretariat reported on the status of ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs. Since its adoption in 2003, there were currently 38 Parties thereto. The Protocol had entered into force on 8 October 2009. Since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Geneva, 21–22 October 2021), no country had become a Party to the Protocol.[3]

10. The Working Group took note of the report by the secretariat on the status of ratification of the Protocol and encouraged signatories and other interested States to proceed with accession thereto as soon as possible.

III. Promotion and coordination

A. Coordination mechanisms and synergies

11. The Chair brought to the attention of delegations the relevant sections of the Report on the 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), specifically sections B, on technical assistance, and E, on awareness-raising and promotion of the Protocol and its interlinkages with other treaties and processes.

12. The Chair of the International PRTR Coordinating Group[4] reported on the Group's activities. The Group's objective was to enhance coordination and cooperation at the global level among international organizations, Governments and other stakeholders interested in developing and implementing PRTR systems. The main outcomes of the activities since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties included adopting the revised terms of reference for the Group aimed at improving approaches to coordination and to sharing experiences regarding international cooperation.[5] The Group had also agreed to continue discussing how to improve the mapping of PRTR activities around the globe. The latter activity included, for example, updating the PRTR global map to reflect new experiences in different countries and make it more understandable for all.[6]

13. A representative of OECD gave an update on the progress of OECD PRTR activities, including publications and tools that could be useful for countries and partner organizations implementing PRTRs.[7] The tools included a clearinghouse of guidance manuals and documents on release estimation techniques,[8] stepwise guidance for PRTR initiation and long-term success,[9] a centre for PRTR data[10] and a global platform to PRTR information.[11] He explained that PRTR development had begun in 1996 and the focus had shifted from setting up PRTRs to the current focus areas: (a) improving PRTRs; (b) enhancing the use of PRTR data; and (c) harmonizing different national PRTR systems. Furthermore, the Recommendation of the OECD Council on establishing and implementing PRTRs had been

[3] Information on the status of ratifications is available at https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XXVII-13-a&chapter=27&clang=_en.

[4] See www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/intlcgimages/about.html.

[5] Report ICG(2002)/IXV/2, para. 5. Available at https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation/international-prtr-coordinating-group#accordion_1.

[6] Ibid., para. 3.

[7] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Global Inventory of Pollutant Releases, available at www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/pollutant-release-transfer-register/.

[8] OECD, Resource Centre for Pollutant Release and Transfer Registrants Release Estimation Techniques, available at www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/pollutant-release-transfer-register/release-estimation-techniques.htm.

[9] Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), IOMC Toolbox for Decision-making in Chemicals Management, available at https://iomctoolbox.org/.

[10] Available at www.oecd.org/env_prtr_data/.

[11] See https://prtr.unece.org/.

updated and adopted in 2018,[12] and in 2023, five years after the adoption of the recommendations, a monitoring report on their implementation would be published. He also presented the flagship publication *Using PRTR Information to Evaluate Progress Towards the Sustainable Development Goal 12*,[13] and explained the harmonized list of pollutants with a long list and a short list.[14]

14. A representative of UNITAR presented the organization's projects over the past six years that were helping countries worldwide to implement PRTRs. Such projects included Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded projects involving six countries from 2015–2020, a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) Quick Start Programme-funded project in Mongolia, and a GEF-funded project in Argentina from late 2021 to mid-2022. He said that the projects' impact was ongoing, with, for example, multiple former project countries enacting legislation on PRTRs in the years following their participation in a UNITAR PRTR project, as well as their respective representatives participating in the current meeting to exchange and share information on PRTR-related topics. UNITAR had also developed guidelines and a series of PRTR technical materials, including videos for different stakeholders and on different aspects of PRTRs.[15]Another important aspect of UNITAR PRTR activities was to provide material to government officials that helped them to promote pollutant portals among stakeholders and decision-makers. UNITAR had therefore developed videos and posters providing concise information on the importance of PRTRs.

15. A representative of the Republic of Moldova, speaking on behalf of the Chair of the Aarhus Convention Task Force on Access to Information, presented the relevance of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs in improving environmental information exchange and digitalization. In that context, the twenty-sixth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (Geneva, 22–23 June 2022) had included a thematic session on access to information, which had focused on advancing public access to environment-related product information, including on: (a) public access to product information and digitalization; (b) public access to product information and measures against greenwashing; and (c) means to encourage operators to inform the public (eco-labelling, eco-auditing, environmental, social and governance solutions).[16] The representative further highlighted that the Task Force on Access to Information had called on countries to develop and update the environmental information system using state-of-the-art digital technology. However, there were challenges in the organization of such systems, such as a lack of investment priority, digital divide and lack of digital literacy. The Republic of Moldova was actively developing supportive tools for small and medium-sized enterprises to improve their access to environmental information. The country was implementing various projects to expand access to environmental information, developing an integrated environmental information management system, and digitalizing existing databases for information exchange between bodies and databases.

16. The Working Group:

(a) Took note of the report by the Chair of the International PRTR Coordinating Group and welcomed the Group's important role in promoting awareness of PRTRs and synergy and coordination on that important topic at the global level;

(b) Also took note of the information provided by the representatives of OECD and UNITAR, and the representative of the Republic of Moldova, also speaking on behalf of the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Information;

[12] Available at https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0440.

[13] OECD, Series on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers No. 25 (Paris, 2021), available at www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/pollutant-release-transfer-register/using-prtr-information-evaluate-progress-towards-sustainable-development-goal-12.pdf.

[14] Available at www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/pollutant-release-transfer-register/harmonised-list-reporting-sectors.xlsx.

[15] Available at https://prtr.unitar.org/site/home.

[16] ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2022/2, paras. 11–22.

(c) Expressed appreciation to the speakers and other partner organizations for the support provided to furthering synergy and the implementation of PRTR systems, thereby strengthening countries' capacities to accede to the Protocol on PRTRs;

(d) Called upon relevant partner organizations and multilateral environmental agreements to cooperate closely and, where possible, to create synergies to further the implementation of PRTR-related activities;

(e) Reiterated its call upon Governments to strengthen cooperation between experts dealing with the Protocol on PRTRs and those dealing with the Aarhus Convention, the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, UNEP/MAP, the UNEP conventions on chemicals (the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the Minamata Convention on Mercury), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other relevant agreements and programmes, as well as experts involved in projects carried out by international organizations, so as to ensure coordination at the national level;

(f) Reiterated its call upon Parties and stakeholders to consider implementing the Protocol and the pan-European Shared Environmental Information System in synergy.

B. Global promotion of the Protocol

17. Turning to the topic of the global promotion of the Protocol, the Chair recalled that the most recent Global Round Table on PRTRs (Geneva, 7–8 November 2018) had been a key event for: the global promotion of the Protocol; identifying synergies; and, exchanging views and experience related to PRTRs. He informed the Working Group that the secretariat, in cooperation with OECD and other partner organizations, would explore opportunities to hold the next such event in 2024. The Chair also informed the Working Group that the Bureau, at its twenty-second meeting (Geneva (hybrid), 9 June 2022), had requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, to update existing lists with substances and thresholds regulated under other relevant treaties, regulations and activities, in cooperation with respective organizations, for possible sharing through PRTR.net and the Protocol's web page[17] – an activity which, in turn, might contribute to the global promotion of the Protocol. He then highlighted the relevant sections of the Report on the implementation of the work programmes of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for 2018–2021 and 2022–2025, specifically section E on awareness-raising and promotion of the Protocol and its interlinkages with other treaties and processes.

18. Representatives of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions secretariats provided an overview of matters relevant to the Working Group. The three conventions shared the common objective of protecting human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes. The Stockholm Convention contained explicit reference to PRTRs in its article 10, on public information awareness and education, and included related reporting obligations under article 15, on reporting. Article 15 of the Rotterdam Convention established national registers and databases, including safety information for chemicals. The Basel Convention was the basis for annex III to the Protocol on PRTRs on disposal and recovery operations. The speaker also explained the process for listing chemicals in annex III to the Rotterdam Convention, triggered by a Party's decision to ban or restrict a chemical, and highlighted the role of the Review Committees under both the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. The process for listing chemicals under the Stockholm Convention, for example, involved submitting proposals to the secretariat for listing in annex A (elimination), annex B (restriction), or annex C (unintentional production). The Review Committee then applied screening criteria and developed a risk profile based on information provided by Parties and observers. A risk management evaluation was also developed, based on socioeconomic information, and the Committee might recommend listing to the Conference

[17] Report of the twenty-second meeting of the Bureau, para. 14 (b). Available at https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/bureau-protocol-prtrs-22nd-meeting.

of the Parties. Examples of chemicals recommended for listing were provided, and reporting requirements under the Basel and Stockholm Conventions were discussed. The speaker emphasized the importance of updating the list of chemicals and provided guidelines and toolkits to support national reporting on hazardous chemicals and waste.

19. A presentation by the representative of the Minamata Convention secretariat followed. The international treaty to protect human health and the environment from mercury was relatively new and had been in force for five years. The speaker highlighted the close relationship with the Protocol on PRTRs, which included the reporting obligation for mercury and its compounds. The presentation focused on the most relevant part of the treaty – emissions and releases of mercury. The speaker further presented key decisions taken by the Minamata Convention's Conference of the Parties, such as on the preparation of inventory guidance. Convention Parties had an obligation to control mercury emissions to air from point sources and to develop respective inventories. At the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, second segment (Bali, Indonesia, 21–25 March 2022), the finalized inventory guidance had been adopted.[18] Parties were also obliged to identify relevant point sources and control releases to land and water. Another key decision adopted at the Conference concerned establishing a scientific group to evaluate the effectiveness of the Convention periodically, based on scientific, economic and other data, including monitoring data.[19]

20. A representative of UNEP reported on the progress of the ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution.[20] The open-ended working group had also been established to make recommendations to the United Nations. The first part of the first session of the open-ended working group had taken place on 6 October 2022 in Nairobi, with the second part scheduled for 30 January–3 February 2023 in Bangkok. The purpose of the second part, was, among other things, to engage in discussions on the options for the scope and functions of the panel, institutional arrangements, mapping of stakeholders and other issues. The plan was to submit respective recommendations to an intergovernmental process by the end of 2024 with the aim of establishing the science-policy panel.

21. The speaker continued, providing an update on the work related to the Intersessional Process Considering the Strategic Approach and Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste Beyond 2020.[21] The Intersessional Process had held its fourth meeting from 29 August–2 September 2022 in Bucharest,[22] after a long break due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual working groups had been formed to continue to find areas of convergence and propose new text. At the end of the meeting, further work had been needed to finalize the discussion on the vision, strategic objectives, targets, means of implementation and finance. The resumed session of the fourth meeting of the Intersessional Process would take place in Nairobi from 27 February–3 March 2023. The ultimate aim of the Intersessional Process was to come up with a single consolidated text to be forwarded to the fifth session of the International Conference for Chemicals Management, which would be hosted by the Government of Germany in Bonn on 25–29 September 2023.

22. The Working Group:

(a) Took note of the information presented by the representatives of 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;

[18] UNEP/MC/COP.4/28/Add.1, decision MC-4/5.
[19] Ibid., decision MC-4/11.
[20] UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/3.
[21] See http://saicm.org/.
[22] See http://saicm.org/Beyond2020/IntersessionalProcess/FourthIntersessionalmeeting/tabid/8226/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

(b) 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;

(c) Called upon Parties, other interested States and organizations to continue the global promotion of the Protocol, including by making relevant guidance material available in all the official languages of the United Nations;

(d) Reiterated its call upon the secretariat and interested States to translate the text of the Protocol into other official languages of the United Nations;

(e) Reiterated its call upon Parties, other interested countries and organizations to promote PRTRs as a reporting tool for multilateral environmental agreements dealing with chemicals and for other relevant multilateral environmental agreements;

(f) Encouraged in that 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 and of the 2013 Minamata Convention; and the future treaty to end plastic pollution;

(g) Encouraged the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs to consider promoting the inclusion of provisions on PRTRs in relevant future treaties, including a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment,[23] thereby promoting synergy and avoiding duplication of work.

IV. Compliance and reporting mechanism

23. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the Chair on the 2021 reporting cycle and welcomed the fact that all Parties to the Protocol had submitted their national implementation report for the 2021 reporting cycle to the secretariat.

24. Furthermore, the Working Group took note of the reports of the Compliance Committee on its eleventh (Geneva (hybrid), 22 October 2021) and twelfth (Geneva, 1 March 2022) meetings (respectively, ECE/MP.PRTR/C.1/2021/6 and ECE/MP.PRTR/C.1/2022/2) and statements by participants.

V. Programme of work and operation of the Protocol

A. Implementation of the work programmes for 2018–2021 and 2022–2025, including financial matters

25. Regarding the implementation of the work programmes for 2018–2021 and 2022–2025, the Working Group took note of:

(a) The Report on the 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);

[23] 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

(b) The Report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the work programmes of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for 2018–2021 and 2022–2025 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/4), as well as information on contributions received between 15 September and 10 November 2022 provided by the secretariat;

(c) Interventions by Georgia, noting that its contribution for 2022 (for the Aarhus Convention ($1,000) and for the Protocol on PRTRs ($1,000) was missing from the report, and the secretariat, clarifying that the issue would be verified and addressed in the meeting report.

26. The Working Group expressed its appreciation for the work carried out by the secretariat and recognized the difficulties posed by limited and unpredictable funding. The Working Group also expressed its concern regarding the low number of pledges and reiterated its call upon Parties to strive not to earmark large contributions for specific purposes, in order to facilitate the management of funds for implementation of the work programme in a balanced way.

B. Development of the Protocol

27. The Chair introduced the item, highlighting 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), including the introductory background and sections A. Major developments since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties and B. Voluntary measures to support implementation of decision V/2. Furthermore, he recalled a series of other documents that provided related information, different recommendations and possible actions. Related documents included 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), the Report on the development of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2019/6), the document entitled Possible approach for revising annexes I, II and III (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2019/6/Add.1) and an accompanying document entitled 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). In addition, the following Compliance Committee documents were also relevant to the development of the Protocol: Synthesis report on the status of implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, (ECE/MP.PRTR/2021/10); and Systemic issues concerning the implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and recommendations on how to address them (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6/Add.2).

28. He continued the introduction, highlighting the two main developments since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties:

(a) The European Commission proposal for the development of the European PRTR;

(b) United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP resolution 5/14 entitled “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument”, adopted with the aim of agreeing on a respective treaty on plastic pollution by 2024.[24]

29. To facilitate the consideration of the item, the discussion was divided into two parts: “Towards modern pollutant release and transfer register systems”, with presentations and discussion linked to issues covered by 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 “Possible linkages to plastic pollution and related efforts”, with presentations and discussion linked to issues covered by the Note on possible linkages between pollutant release and transfer registers and plastic pollution (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/6).

[24] UNEP/PP/OEWG/1/INF/1.

Towards modern pollutant release and transfer register systems

30. The Chair made introductory remarks, recalling the respective note by the Bureau (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/5) and inviting the panellists to make their presentations.

31. Representatives of the European Commission presented a legal proposal to improve integration of and modernize current PRTR and other related regulations.[25] They also explained that the European Green Deal was the European Union growth strategy to become climate neutral, provide affordable clean technology solutions and implement a circular economy by 2050. Within that framework, the Commission had decided to revise the European Pollutant Pollution Release and Transfer Register Regulation (E-PRTR)[26] and the Industrial Emissions Directive[27] from 2010, both of which were complementary, with the former facilitating the monitoring of pollution reduction and enhancing public participation in the decision-making process, while the latter established a system of command and control to ensure a progressive reduction of pollution. The E-PRTR had been evaluated in 2017, and although the evaluation had confirmed that it was fit for purpose and important, it had also identified certain shortcomings that could be alleviated for improved efficiency and effectiveness. The subsequent two-year revision process had involved discussions with a wide range of stakeholders at each level of analysis. The work had aimed at making the legislation more effective, capable of supporting innovation, resource efficiency, decarbonization and safety – in line with the respective European Union agendas. The speakers also explained how the proposal addressed specific impact assessment problem areas and noted that the proposal's objective was also to make the legislation future-proof to enable industrial transformation.[28] All related analytical work was publicly available, and links to the supporting analysis, methodological choices and measures not retained for discussion were provided.

32. The representative of Serbia shared information regarding the country's green digitalization project and PRTR in particular. The Serbian Environmental Protection Agency pollution portal had become a crucial source of data for the Government, providing data on air, water and noise pollution, as well as on waste. The project had manifold roles: it aimed to support the related agency's work and enhance policies and decision-making efforts to reduce pollution, while at the same time improving the safety and reliability of the information system, reducing costs for business entities reporting data to the system. Several practical examples included, the implementation of a two-factor identification system, similar to that used by online banking systems, to ensure the authenticity of data submitters and allow for the full removal of paper forms from the reporting process, and other measures to ensure the highest possible data accuracy. Data accuracy was also achieved through solid enforcement of respective laws and regulations, such as by taking legal action against those companies that submitted inaccurate data or failed to submit data altogether. Regarding the

[25] See https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/proposal-revision-industrial-emissions-directive_en and https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/proposal-regulation-industrial-emissions-portal_en.

[26] Regulation (EC) No 166/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 January 2006 concerning the establishment of a European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register and amending Council Directives 91/689/EEC and 96/61/EC, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 33 (2006), pp. 1–17.

[27] Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control) (Recast), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 334 (2010), p. 17.

[28] Related legislation includes: the Industrial Emissions Directive; Directive (EU) 2015/2193 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on the limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from medium combustion plants, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 313 (2015), pp. 1–19; Directive 2012/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directive 96/82/EC, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 197 (2012), pp. 77–113; Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban wastewater treatment, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 135 (1991), pp. 40–52; and Directive 2003/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 October 2003 establishing a scheme for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Community and amending Council Directive 96/61/E, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 275 (2003), pp. 32–46.

improved usefulness of PRTR data for stakeholders, he added that another key element lay in sufficient disaggregation of reported data. For example, improving the use of the European List of Waste[29] and categories of waste reflected in reporting by disaggregating the category for rubber and plastic into each of the seven main categories of plastics (polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polypropylene (PP), etc.) and rubber was a simple and efficient step in supporting the recycling industry in its business model, thereby facilitating management and investment decisions.

33. The representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland provided an overview of the national PRTR system, which held data from 2007 onwards, covering some 6,000 industrial facilities from 99 economic sectors that reported on 91 substances. The speaker then turned to current research aiming at exploring the effectiveness of the country's pollutant portal. The forthcoming conclusions from that exercise might further contribute to the discussions on the development of the Protocol, as the review could help find solutions for making PRTR data more useful to different stakeholder groups. Addressing the specifics of the research project, the presenters explained that, based on preliminary results, the scope of the programme had also been significantly expanded to include other inventories and cover the wider useability of pollution-related information for operators, regulators and the public. Research feedback from stakeholders suggested that the public was interested in information on understanding environmental data, impacts on public health and whether the data reported "good" performance. The speakers discussed the considerations arising from the review of the national PRTR website. Focusing on the user experience had led to the following considerations, namely to: (a) explore merging other related inventories, but balance that approach with maintaining the clarity of PRTR data; and (b) making industrial emissions information more meaningful for public awareness. The presenters invited those interested to contact them and work on the important issue of making PRTR data more useful. In that context, they also summarized the wider views from stakeholders on PRTR data dissemination arising from the research, which included topics such as: (a) educating the public; (b) contextualizing data; (c) health impacts; (d) adequately simplifying information matching stakeholder needs; and (e) making data more useful through baselining.

34. The representative of the European Environmental Bureau/European ECO-Forum noted that much could be done to improve the effectiveness of PRTRs. He presented the example of the Industrial Plant Data Viewer[30] showcasing how existing information could be used better if put in a different context. Users could: compare plants for their emissions intensities (applying the same metric also used for the European Union Best Available Techniques standards), health costs and permit limits across plants, countries and parent companies; and, view more detailed information on plant derogations and put information into context (e.g., how a given installation compared to a similar installation and allowed rating of permit stringency). The presenter then put forward ideas on the European Union zero pollution ambition and the benchmarking of respective progress. That required an approach to reporting where it was possible to have input/output metrics for production and pollutant releases that would also enable benchmarking on performance. The speaker also invited participants to make use of PRTR data, together with other data, including from environmental management systems, to develop a set of key performance indicators for a set of activities/thematic themes. Using PRTRs to provide key indicators for decision-making would fill a widely recognized gap regarding successfully managing the transition to a circular and sustainable economy, give meaning to performance ratings and facilitate compliance promotion. Lastly, he emphasized the need for a digital approach to make better use of information, notably focusing on improved knowledge-sharing on pollution prevention actions taken by all actors involved.

35. The representative of Israel briefed the Working Group on the recently published annual Israeli PRTR report for 2021. The report also contained a chapter with new analysis on the relationship between the quantity of contaminant emissions to air and the

[29] See https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/implementation-waste-framework-directive_en.

[30] Available at https://eipie.eu/projects/ipdv/.

socioeconomic index of local authorities,[31] as defined by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics.

36. The Chair noted that the above-mentioned examples demonstrated that PRTRs had vast potential to serve as carefully crafted systems that would make information easily accessible to users with different needs, including public authorities, the general population, industry, NGOs and other stakeholders. During the ensuing discussion, participants provided information showing that, very much similarly to the presented work, many countries were currently working on improving the usefulness of their PRTR data for users from the Government, industry and the public. Participants also reported on work to update their PRTR software with new functionalities and expressed interest in cooperating on topics such as making PRTR portals more useful for different stakeholders and attempting to accommodate their needs for pollutant-related data through easy-to-use, integrated data portals.

37. The Working Group took note of:

(a) 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 included in subsection I.B thereof, 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 on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/4);

(b) The examples presented by the representatives of Israel, Serbia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Commission and the European Environmental Bureau/European ECO-Forum, along with information provided by other participants, and expressed its appreciation to presenters for sharing valuable experiences.

38. The Working Group recognized: (a) the importance of modernizing PRTR systems; and (b) the usefulness of the presented activities in showing ways to optimize existing PRTR systems and design new PRTRs that addressed the Protocol's objective to establish coherent and integrated PRTRs in an efficient manner.

39. Furthermore, the Working Group encouraged Parties that had 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.

Possible linkages to plastic pollution and related efforts

40. The Chair introduced the topic of possible linkages between PRTRs and plastic pollution, recalling the respective note by the Bureau (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2022/6), and inviting the panellists to make their presentations.

41. A representative of UNEP/MAP introduced the work of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), a regional instrument for the Mediterranean that had 21 contracting Parties covering the Mediterranean countries and the European Union. He presented the work on capacity-building, compliance reporting and PRTR reporting. He highlighted the Barcelona Convention's current efforts related to preventing plastic pollution, referring to the updated Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean.[32] Under the Convention's PRTR-related reporting, releases from wastewater treatment plants were the most relevant source for pollution and the key source for plastic pollution releases to water. Addressing those issues therefore needed to be prioritized. The speaker informed participants

[31] Israeli Ministry of Environmental Protection and EcoTraders Limited, "Examining the correlation between air emissions and a socioeconomic index" (n.p., n.d.). Available at https://unece.org/documents/2022/11/examining-correlation-between-air-emissions-and-socioeconomic-index-published.

[32] Available at https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37131/21ig25_27_2509_eng.pdf.

that Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention had thus agreed on new Regional Plans on Urban Wastewater Treatment and Sewage Sludge Management,[33] including reference standards, regional effluent limit values, and – in line with a circular economy approach – prioritization of energy efficiency and material reclamation. Several respective guidelines had been prepared under the auspices of UNEP/MAP to support the implementation of the agreed Regional Plans by using available technologies for treating wastewater and sludge, focusing on the economic potential of material reclamation, a decision support system for the selection of treatment technologies to ensure energy efficiency in treatment, and a standardized approach to monitoring microplastics originating from wastewater treatment plants.

42. A representative of UN/CEFACT spoke about a UN/CEFACT initiative on data collection and dissemination to improve the sustainability performance of value chains in the garment and footwear sector. The sector was of specific concern and a priority for the sustainable and circular transition, with many sectoral activities also addressing the challenges regarding plastic pollution and the associated releases of hazardous substances. Those releases were of concern throughout all phases of the value chain in the sector. Indeed, consumers and investors were paying increasing attention to the sustainable and circular performance of products and organizations, and policymakers and regulators were increasingly putting forward policies and regulations to tackle those aspects. In that context, the representative informed participants about the difficulties for the sector resulting from complex and fragmented global value chains. The challenges were related to the sector's high risks to the environment and human rights, combined with a lack of both an internationally harmonized approach on policies and regulations addressing those risks and consumer confidence in information on and claims regarding products. The focus of the UN/CEFACT initiative was to enhance traceability across the value chain and to foster transparency of sustainable and circular performance of products and facilities in the industry. To that end, a toolbox had been developed containing policy recommendations, information exchange standards and technologies such as blockchain to enable trusted data collection and exchange along the value chain. Data collection and trusted data exchange were important for improving the performance of value chains in the sector. Policymakers and regulators were implementing policies, regulations and strategies to address those concerns.

43. The representative of the European Environmental Bureau/European ECO-Forum stated that plastic production was expected to reach 1.1 billion tons by 2050, with at least 40 million tons ending up in the ocean annually. In all, 13,000 chemicals were associated with plastics, with 3,200 having properties hazardous to human health and the environment. The PRTR community could play a role in the various stages of the plastic life cycle. PRTR experts and pollution portals could support efforts to stop plastic pollution, including by facilitating work related to safe and sustainable design, restrictions on non-essential plastic use, better waste management, and improved tracking of different waste types. The speaker suggested considering a "no evidence of no harm = no market" principle regarding plastics and chemicals production. "Non-essential uses" should be cut and there was a need for a product policy to deal with the materials design and consumption aspects. The PRTR system could better inform people about use-related impacts and diffuse emissions. The European Union Substances of Concern In articles as such or in complex objects (Products) database [34] tracked substances of very high concern but could be better used if combined with European Union waste codes information, broken down by plastic type. In order to fight plastic pollution, it was important to have reliable data on pollution prevention efforts across the life cycle of plastic. The PRTR community could help in that regard, notably by extending the list of pollutants, linking with other databases, for example, "product passport(s)", so to enhance citizens' choices and awareness-raising, and providing tools for ranking efforts and improvement potential for producers, (main) users and waste treatment facilities by integrating permit conditions and operational data.

[33] Available at https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37130/21ig25_27_2508_eng.pdf.

[34] See https://echa.europa.eu/scip.

44. The subsequent discussion revolved around the use of the PRTR system to monitor plastic pollution. The presenters discussed various ways in which the PRTR system could be utilized to track plastic waste transfers, releases from plastic products, and the release of microplastics from wastewater treatment plants. Interventions also highlighted the importance of following the negotiations for a new legally binding instrument on plastic pollution and promoting the Protocol's requirements and their possible replication. The representative of the European Union encouraged the secretariat and Parties to engage in the discussions to ensure that any international legally binding instrument was fully coherent with and complementary to the Protocol. The representative of OECD shared reflections on utilizing the PRTR system and discussed how to track plastic pollution. The representative of UNEP/MAP referred to the guidelines to be developed on monitoring and measuring microplastic releases, expected to be ready by spring or early summer 2023.

45. The Working Group 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 the Protocol's national focal points to:

(a) 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;

(b) Promote the Protocol's requirements and the replication of PRTRs in the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution;

(c) Analyse how existing national/regional PRTR reporting from production facilities and dissemination infrastructures could be made fit for managing data on plastic pollution specifically;

(d) Share experience on pollutant release data collection and dissemination, including the application of release estimation techniques, relevant to informing and shaping reporting and dissemination tools under a future legally binding instrument on plastic pollution and in particular where data from measurements and calculations might be difficult to obtain.

46. The Working Group took note of the examples presented by the representatives of UNEP/MAP, UN/CEFACT and the European Environmental Bureau/the European ECO-Forum, along with the information provided by other participants, and expressed its appreciation to presenters for sharing valuable experiences.

47. Furthermore, the Working Group requested the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to explore opportunities for cooperation with UN/CEFACT.

VI. Fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol

48. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the secretariat regarding the related outcomes of the twenty-sixth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (Geneva, 22–23 June 2022).[35]

49. The Working Group:

(a) Called on Parties potentially open to hosting the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol 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;

(b) 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.

[35] See https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Public-Participation/events/365937.

VII. Subregional and national activities: achievements, needs and challenges for capacity-building

50. The Chair introduced the item, recalling that capacity-building remained vital for the promotion of the Protocol to countries with developing economies and economies in transition, and stressed that success in the Protocol's ratification and in establishing PRTRs was also very much dependent on the political will of the decision-makers in the countries concerned. He then invited the panellists to make their presentations.

51. A representative of UNDP, also speaking on behalf of Argentina, presented the work on the development of a state-of-the-art PRTR system in Argentina. The process was headed by the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development. The PRTR activities were part of a wider project on environmentally sound management of persistent organic pollutants, mercury and other hazardous chemicals in the country. The project also included improving relevant legal and regulatory frameworks and inventories. The PRTR strategy in Argentina consisted of four key elements: an interministerial working group; a draft national strategy for implementation; a pilot project; and awareness-raising activities. The presenter highlighted the importance of engaging private sector entities, public entities, NGOs, academia, universities and other relevant stakeholders. In that context, the interministerial working group had been an effective and useful tool, with 14 participants covering a comprehensive set of topics related to the PRTR strategy. The PRTR pilot project was an effective means of linking up with another government agency to coordinate with various jurisdictions and stakeholders, including the private sector. As part of the project, a technical process had been established that effectively identified reporting facilities, owners and operators.

52. A representative of Armenia outlined recent developments in Armenia to create a platform for the ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs. Several laws had been adopted, and the legislative framework was being improved and aligned with conventions ratified by Armenia and related European Union directives. The new laws covered the protection of the ozone layer, mercury releases, atmospheric air protection and environmental impact assessments. The environmental monitoring framework was also being improved. The main reporting formats were presented, including self-reporting by large industrial facilities and extractive enterprises, and monitoring by the Hydrometeorology and Monitoring Centre of the Ministry of Environment. Furthermore, the Ministry and the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia were jointly developing an automated emissions management system to simplify reporting formalities for industry actors. The system, which was currently at the experimental stage, covered about 1,200 enterprises and over 3,500 stationary sources of emissions. The presenter emphasized the importance of NGOs including PRTR in their strategies and donor or partner organizations prioritizing PRTRs to help identify existing problems and find solutions.

53. The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina presented the challenges and achievements in implementing the Protocol on PRTRs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The aim was to achieve ratification of the Protocol and establish a functional and sustainable database. Among the challenges was the fact that the country was a decentralized State, with no national law on environmental protection, which made implementing environmental protection laws complex. The country aimed to join the European Union, and the Protocol on PRTRs was included in a strategy for harmonizing State laws with those of the European Union. Several projects had been implemented to establish a PRTR system and collect data, but progress in establishing a functioning PRTR system had been slow. However, a new project, supported by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection and the German Environment Agency, might change that. The project was currently being implemented with the aim of developing functional registries for pollutant releases in the Western Balkans region and the Republic of Moldova.

54. A representative of Cambodia gave a presentation on the implementation of a PRTR in Cambodia. The key PRTR project, funded by GEF and implemented by UNITAR, had been implemented in two phases: phase I (2009–2012); and phase II (2015–2019). The project included the development of legislation, the establishment of a national committee

for stakeholder consultations, and the development of a web portal and online reporting system for industrial facilities. The system currently collected data from 36 facilities and covered various aspects of production, waste and emissions. The Government had also developed a manual for five sectors to guide industry reporting. Future plans included updating the Environmental Code, integrating PRTR with the environmental monitoring system, and continuing training for industrial users. Lastly, the speaker said that the pandemic had caused a slowdown in implementation, but that the project was set to continue in 2022–2023.

55. A representative of Kazakhstan made a presentation highlighting the Protocol's role for the country in supporting the human rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, health and well-being. Kazakhstan had ratified the Protocol on PRTR in December 2019, aiming to provide extended access for the public to information, facilitate its participation in decision-making on environmental matters, and provide access to justice. The Environmental Code, which established the PRTR as an open access database on pollutant releases into the environment, had entered into force on 1 July 2021. The PRTR provided information on pollutant releases from human activities, which originated either from point or diffuse sources into environmental media. The operators of facilities where one or more activities specified in annex I to the Protocol were carried out must report information on stationary sources, while information on diffuse sources was the responsibility of the competent authorities. The speaker described the information that the PRTR provided, including geographical location, type of activity, operator, type of pollutant or waste and the environmental media on which the releases had an impact.

56. The representative of Morocco explained that the objective of current PRTR activities in the country was to analyse the national context regarding PRTR implementation and to raise awareness of the role of the PRTR system in controlling and reducing pollution. The speaker highlighted that Morocco had taken several measures related to PRTRs, including regulations, incentives, assessment and surveillance. In Morocco, different information systems and databases were currently in place, however, the country had no reliable PRTR system at the current time. The speaker highlighted the need to take further steps, including in the areas of technical assistance, capacity-building, experience exchanges and establishing a national register for national emission coefficients to further develop the PRTR system.

57. Representatives of Ukraine informed the Working Group of the recent adoption of the Law of Ukraine on the National Pollutant Release and Transfer Register, which also addressed the country's related international obligations under the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement. The law had been adopted in September 2022, its provisions would take effect in October 2023, and the formation of the national PRTR would start in early 2024. Currently, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources was drafting the relevant by-laws and developing an information and communication system to ensure electronic interaction between operators reporting to the PRTR, competent authorities and the public, including addressing aspects related to data dissemination through a web portal. The main functional principles of the planned system were its legal framework, integration with other environmental databases, public participation, completeness, comparability and reliability of the data. The presenters stated that the national PRTR system would facilitate the comparability of PRTR data internationally and support the fulfilment of international obligations by Ukraine, including as a candidate for European Union membership.

58. The representative of Guta Environmental Law Association/the European ECO-Forum talked about the progress made in Western Balkan countries and the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of PRTR systems and the challenges and achievements of related capacity-building projects. The speaker highlighted that different donors and NGOs had contributed to the projects, and Serbia was the most advanced in that regard among the Western Balkan countries, currently serving as an example and a resource for others. The speaker stressed the need for capacity-building in a broad sense, with workshops, training and guidance on reporting methodology and interpretation of PRTR data. She recognized that civil society had difficulties in interpreting data and using it to support their actions. Another key issue was the need to upgrade PRTR web pages and develop step-by-step guides for authorities and operators on using information technology systems and methodology for

internal data verification and validation. The speaker also emphasized the need for regular dialogue between competent authorities and operators, focusing on very concrete problems related to reporting, as well as on sharing examples demonstrating the usefulness of PRTR data for civil society and other stakeholders, and on taking over ownership of PRTRs and their continued development after projects had ended.

59. The representative of UNITAR talked about the importance of PRTRs and his experiences of working on PRTRs for over 20 years in different countries. He gave examples including the 10-year journey of Chile to enact a PRTR law and how training materials needed to be updated to better match modern requirements such as advances in digitalization. From his experience, he extracted the following elements that were key for successful PRTR implementation:

(a) Countries defining a clear objective for implementing a PRTR system;

(b) Identifying strong drivers to ensure PRTR platforms' longevity. Examples for drivers included the intention to join OECD or the Protocol on PRTRs in order to keep PRTR development in place across changing Governments;

(c) Empowering the PRTR project lead;

(d) Providing training tailored to the current national setting and cultural aspects, taking into consideration existing approaches and perceptions;

(e) Participating in information-sharing within a region through exchanges on how challenges were addressed in similar settings;

(f) Recognizing the importance of legislation.

60. The representative of UNDP presented the organization's work on chemicals and waste projects, specifically focusing on its support for PRTR development and implementation. UNDP had been providing technical support and advice to countries since 2004 to help them comply with reporting obligations and adopt best practices to reduce the release of harmful chemicals and waste. The presentation covered UNDP work on chemicals and waste projects in different regions, namely Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, and highlighted the focus on compliance with international agreements and national development plans. The speaker also presented examples of innovative approaches to achieving transformative change in the management of chemicals and waste, such as the Green Chemistry project in Viet Nam and the Secondary Copper project in China and establishing health-care waste management systems in Ghana, Madagascar, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Lastly, the speaker provided a list of UNDP actions in support of PRTR development and implementation in various countries, including Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Maldives, the Philippines, Rwanda and Viet Nam.

61. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of a number of countries and organizations made statements on developing pollutant portals.

62. The representative of Guinea-Bissau discussed the country's experience with access to information and implementation of environmental policies. Although Guinea-Bissau had not yet ratified the Protocol, the Government intend to submit the terms of the country's accession in the near future. The country was committed to the concepts of the Aarhus Convention,[36] particularly the pillar on access to information, which it saw as being essential for implementing the pillars on public participation and access to justice. Various environmental laws provided general support for the right of access to information and the country was undergoing a legislative reform process and had established bodies to set environmental policy. While Guinea-Bissau intended to establish, for example, a technical framework to effectively register pollutant releases and transfers, a lack of financial resources, technical equipment and trained human resources to monitor pollutant emissions remained challenging. He reiterated the commitment of Guinea-Bissau to putting in place the required legal and technical framework and building human capacity to provide for effective access to information on environmental matters.

[36] Guinea-Bissau acceded to the Aarhus Convention on 4 April 2023.

63. The representative of Albania informed participants that the country had started negotiations on accession to the European Union. All governmental institutions were preparing for the process, which included amending legislation and regulations. PRTR-related legislative amendments were being drafted to make reporting requirements for environmental permits more stringent for operators. There were plans to approve the drafts in 2023. While limited resources remained a challenge in implementing regulations on waste management, emissions and chemicals, projects supported by Germany were, for example, helping the national environmental agency to incorporate a large combustion plants module into current PRTR software and to improve public access to environmental information.

64. The representative of Montenegro echoed the need for support in implanting PRTRs as voiced by previous speakers with countries at a similar stage of PRTR implementation. She informed participants that, in Montenegro, the law on the environment provided the legal basis for implementing the Protocol's provisions. Progress had been made, including through an international project to enhance PRTRs in the Western Balkans region and the Republic of Moldova. The project was supported by Germany. Legal, institutional and technical needs had been assessed and capacity-building proposals for the establishment of the PRTR in Montenegro had been made. An efficient and effective system, from monitoring to preparation and dissemination of reports, needed to be established, along with effective data control measures, the corresponding inspections and the corresponding institutional framework.

65. The representative of EcoContact/the Aarhus Centre Chisinau for Environmental Information and Consultation in the Republic of Moldova explained that, since 2018, emission reporting and pollutant transfer had been made mandatory for all operators in the country. He emphasized the importance of capacity-building and collaboration between civil society, operators and environmental authorities for the successful implementation and development of the PRTR system. Capacity-building events had been organized to train operators on collaboration and on application of electronic reports, evaluation and validation of inventories by environmental authorities, and data reporting, dissemination and interpretation of potential risks and impact assessment for civil society and other stakeholders. Challenges for PRTR implementation in the Republic of Moldova persisted, including the need for developing and updating estimation methods for diffuse emissions, correlating estimative data provided by operators with monitoring data, simplifying the overall compilation process of the inventory, and making improvements to the format in which data were provided publicly. He concluded by inviting feedback from stakeholders regarding improving effectiveness and involvement in the Protocol's implementation.

66. The representative of Environment-People-Law/the European ECO-Forum reflected on the national PRTR law adopted by Ukraine. She expressed appreciation for the long-awaited progress in that regard and hope that Ukraine would be able to launch a fully fledged national PRTR by the end of 2024. She also suggested that the Government of Ukraine should submit the law for review to the Compliance Committee to facilitate the development of the Ukrainian PRTR in line with the Protocol's provisions.

67. The representative of OECD spoke about the organization's tools and guidance material in support of the development of PRTRs.[37]

68. The Working Group took note of the examples presented by panellists representing Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Ukraine, UNDP (also speaking on behalf of Argentina), UNITAR and Guta Association of Environmental Law/the European ECO-Forum, along with information provided by other participants, and expressed its appreciation to presenters for sharing valuable experiences.

69. Also thanking partner organizations for their important work in providing opportunities for capacity-building, the Working Group welcomed efforts by countries and

[37] See www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/pollutant-release-transfer-register/; www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/pollutant-release-transfer-register/release-estimation-techniques.htm; https://iomctoolbox.org/; and www.oecd.org/env_prtr_data/.

organizations to promote the establishment of PRTR systems and steps taken towards the implementation of and accession to the Protocol.

70. Furthermore, the Working Group:

(a) Requested the Bureau and the secretariat to explore opportunities for organizing a similar session on capacity-building at the future meetings of the Working Group of the Parties;

(b) Encouraged the Protocol's national focal points to promote, in cooperation with national focal points of other relevant treaties and organizations, the provision of financial support, such as through GEF, to countries that wished to establish PRTR systems of their own or as a group.

VIII. Calendar of meetings

71. The Working Group took note of the meetings planned for 2023.[38]

IX. Adoption of the decisions and outcomes of the meeting

72. The Working Group took note of the statements by delegations, adopted the decisions and major outcomes presented by the Chair at the current meeting (PRTR/WG.1/2022/Inf.2), and requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, to finalize the report incorporating the outcomes and decisions adopted.

73. The Chair then thanked the participants for their contributions and the interpreters and the secretariat for their support and closed the meeting.

[38] A calendar of meetings for 2023 is available at https://unece.org/info/events/unece-meetings-and-events/environmental-policy/public-participation.