

**UNECE****United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

Press Release ECE/ENV/04/P11
Geneva, 23 June 2004

Pollutant registers to be proposed as key public information tool at Environment and Health Ministerial Conference

Recent landmarks in the development of the pan-European public's right-to-know about the sources of pollutants will be the subject of a seminar organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) on the opening day of the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health: "The future for our children".¹ The seminar, "PRTRs Now! How pollutant release and transfer registers can promote pan-European environmental and public health", will look at how the UNECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs), signed in Kiev in May 2003, is expected to influence public understanding of pollutant risks to the environment and to public health.

Experts from intergovernmental organizations, government, academia and civil society will address the incorporation of the principles of the Aarhus Convention and its PRTR Protocol² into the design of a proposed upgrade of the European pollutant emission register, which currently covers 16 of the European Union's 25 member States. The participants will further examine how regional pollutant registers might support the development of a pan-European environmental health information system.

According to Mr. Patrice Robineau, UNECE Acting Deputy Executive Secretary, who will chair the event, "the implementation of the Aarhus Convention's Protocol is expected to revolutionize the pan-European public's right-to-know about the sources of pollutants." The seminar will also highlight how different countries from across the UNECE region are rapidly pursuing the establishment of new right-to-know mechanisms.

The seminar is being co-sponsored by the European Environment Agency, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe and the European ECO Forum.

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For more details about the seminar, please contact:

Mr. Michael STANLEY-JONES
UNECE Environment and Human Settlements Division
Palais des Nations
CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Phone: +41 (0)22 917 24 42

Mobile : +41 (0)79 694 87 04

Fax: +41 (0)22 917 01 07

E-mail: michael.stanley-jones@unece.org

Web site: <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.htm>
<http://www.aarhusconvention.org>

¹ The event, organized at the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health: 'The future for our children', will take place on Wednesday, 23 June 2004, from 12.30 to 1.30 p.m., in the Bartok Room, Budapest Congress Center in Budapest, Hungary.

² The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was adopted in 1998 and entered into force in 2001. It has 27 Parties. Its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers was signed at the fifth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe", in Kiev in May 2003. The Convention and the Protocol are open to accession by any member State of the United Nations.