

Intervention for the chemicals MEAs to the MOP to the PRTR Protocol – April 21, 2010

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretariat, the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, and the Parties to the Protocol¹, for achieving this historic milestone. We know that designing and implementing a national PRTR requires years of commitment from multiple stakeholders, so the entry into force of the Kiev Protocol speaks volumes of the efforts from many parties, in many countries and over many years.

As many of you are probably aware, UNEP hosts the Secretariats of several legally-binding international environmental agreements which are specifically oriented towards chemicals, including the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, 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 Vienna Convention with its Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

A number of these instruments specifically cite PRTRs as a tool which can help to achieve the goals of the agreement.

The linkages between PRTRs and the chemicals and wastes agreements are of two kinds. Publicly-accessible pollutant registers are first and foremost systems providing information about the release and transfers of substances which potentially could lead to harm in the environment or to human health.

The Rotterdam Convention **Information exchange provisions contained in article 14 require**

“Each Party ... [to] facilitate:

(a) The exchange of scientific, technical, economic and legal information concerning the chemicals within the scope of this Convention, including toxicological, ecotoxicological and safety information;

(b) The provision of publicly available information on domestic regulatory actions relevant to the objectives of this Convention;

Article 15 addressing Implementation of the Convention requires that “Each Party... take such measures as may be necessary to establish and strengthen its national infrastructures and institutions for the effective implementation of this Convention. These measures may include..., as required, the adoption or amendment of national legislative or administrative measures

(a) The establishment of national registers and databases including safety information for chemicals”.

The Basel Convention will benefit from the specific requirement in the Protocol's art. 5 that Transboundary movements of hazardous waste above the threshold of 2 tons be reported in PRTR national registers, including the source, destination and final disposition, whether for disposal or recycling of such wastes.

¹ The Protocol has Parties which are not party to the Aarhus Convention, notably Switzerland.

The Stockholm Convention contains provisions which echo principles and practices found in the Aarhus Convention and Kiev Protocol. Article 9, for example, on information exchange, establishes a clearinghouse mechanism for information exchange on POPs, including information provided by Parties, IGOs and NGOs. Article 10 which addresses Public information, awareness and education calls for “Public participation in addressing persistent organic pollutants and their health and environmental effects” and requires Parties, within their capabilities, to promote and facilitate “provision to the public of all available information” on POPs.

The most direct link between the Stockholm Convention and the Protocol on PRTR is found in article 10, para. 5, which says

“Each Party shall give sympathetic consideration to developing mechanisms, such as pollutant release and transfer registers, for the collection and dissemination of information on estimates of the annual quantities of the chemicals listed in Annex A, B or C that are released or disposed of.”

Common to the U.N. chemicals and wastes MEAs has been the effort to ensure the multistakeholder approach is promoted.

It has already been mentioned by Mr. Karel Blaha that the Protocol is expected to be involved in the Synergies process underway among the chemicals and wastes conventions “to avoid duplication and activities and wasting of money.” UNEP understands and shares this aim.

Projects are underway both in and outside the UNECE region where this tool is in fact in use. A project is underway with support by the Global Environment Facility and in collaboration with UNITAR, [UNEP and UNECE](#)² to design the national PRTR systems in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Ecuador, Peru and Cambodia, to incorporate Stockholm Convention POPs into the PRTR system under design in Thailand, and to facilitate POPs reporting for Chile through its PRTR system. A regional PRTR approach in Central American countries is also a part of this project.

Speaking on behalf of the MEAs, we are also delighted to participate in this Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. We look forward to the increased recognition of PRTRs as the useful tool which it is and welcome the opportunity to increase the application of PRTRs in the activities arising from carrying out our numerous mandates.

² UNECE submitted a letter to UNEP committing in-kind staff support to the GEF project. It discharges this obligation inter alia through its participation on the GEF POPs PRTR Project Steering Committee.