

## Statement on the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Aarhus Convention

Mr. (Ms) Chairperson, Distinguished Colleagues,

I am pleased to greet you on behalf of the Republic of Croatia at this first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kiev Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Aarhus Convention (Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters).

The Republic of Croatia has been signatory of both the Aarhus Convention and the PRTR Protocol from the beginning and has ratified the Protocol on 14 July 2008, as the 10<sup>th</sup> country to do so.

As soon as Croatia ratified the Protocol, we have initiated procedure for the establishment of the national Environmental Pollution Registry (EPR), which is kept by the Croatian Environment Agency (CEA). This Registry provides the means for the implementation of the UNECE PRTR Protocol, as an international binding legal instrument since 8 October 2009, and of the EU Regulation 166/06 on the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register in Croatia. The Croatian regulations and the Registry cover all the requirements of both of these documents. We have stricter reporting threshold than the EU and more pollutants are covered in our regulations and the Registry.

In view of making the access to information about pollutant release and transfer easier for the public, several steps have been taken:

- all the information and documents related to the EPR are available on the Agency's web-site (currently only in Croatian, though),
- National reports on data entered into the EPR are also accessible to the public on CEA web site,
- help desk has been established to enable daily communication of the public with Agency's employees, provide data on request and to give data providers and competent authorities assistance they might need to carry out their tasks,
- workshop trainings are being organized by the Agency for the civil servants who work on tasks related to the Environmental Pollution Registry in the Counties' competent bodies and
- Croatian Environment Agency has also developed a Manual for the Environmental Pollution Registry with data quality assurance procedures and Instructions for use of the Environmental Pollution Registry's database.

The EPR database has started functioning on 10 March 2009, and the interest of the public for this database has been so big that its administrators have on 20 January 2010 approved the 10,000<sup>th</sup> user account for access to the database. In this database data can be entered online, which has resulted in significant improvement of both the quality and the quantity of the reported data (50% more reporting facilities than in the previous year). The database makes it possible for the data to be aggregated thematically in various reports and enables the search by freely entered terms or by defined requests.

There are several categories of users:

- polluters who have the reporting obligation and who can see their own data,

- local competent authorities that can see data pertaining to their area of jurisdiction,
- national authorities that can see all the data and
- members of the public that can see all the data with the exception of confidential data which is protected and thus unavailable to public, so that the public has access to transparent information on the one hand, and, at the same time, confidentiality of certain types of data is preserved.

Work on further upgrades / new functionalities has started and it will create a separate EPR web-site where the aggregate information collected through EPR will be published and made available to public, and another one that will enable Croatia to produce appropriate EPR reports to the European Commission when we join the EU.

Having such a registry that enables overviews of the situation with pollutants in various areas and being able to provide timely and accurate information to the public about this is very important. It enables public participation in environmental matters by providing the information on pollutant release and transfer through the appropriate registry.

Croatia has already done most of the necessary work on this registry, and the last stages of its development are beginning. We hope that the establishment of this registry and its sister registers in other countries will help produce the more active public participation in environmental matters and decrease the pollution levels in both Croatia and in the other states that are Parties to the PRTR Protocol.

This would then create a healthier and better world for future generations, a world built upon the principles of democracy and sustainability, high goals to which we aspire. It is an honour and a privilege to be a part of this endeavour, and we will continue to support it through our actions in the future.

Thank You Mr. (Ms) Chairperson