



a threat of flooding, water pollution, water scarcity and groundwater depletion, or if there is a danger to human health and safety.

Moreover, the Convention specifically requires Parties to allow the public to participate in various decisions on whether to permit activities designed to hold back and store water, such as dams, and installations for the transfer of water resources between river basins, as well as related activities.

In a transboundary context, riparian States and joint bodies for transboundary water cooperation should facilitate access to meeting documents of the joint bodies and their subsidiary organs, including information about the conditions of the transboundary waters and the results of monitoring, prevention and control measures, permits issued and the conditions to be met and drafts of plans and programmes, including comments by non-governmental organizations on them.

When transboundary cooperation has not yet progressed to the establishment of joint management institutions, riparian States should provide for public participation in the preparation and development of international water agreements. For example, the development of international documents, plans and programmes for specific catchment areas should be open to public participation, including programmes for monitoring the conditions of transboundary waters.

### ***The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers***

The 2003 Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention (in force since 2009) is the first legal international instrument on pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs). The Protocol promotes the establishment and proper maintenance of coherent nationwide systems that collect and report on pollution information. The systematic organization and storage of pollution information not only enhances public access to information and facilitates public participation, it also promotes pollution reduction. Because the Protocol requires owners and operators to regularly report on a wide variety of activities — such as mining, waste and wastewater management and intensive livestock production — and substances, Governments are better able to track pollution trends, monitor pollution by owners and operators in different sectors and thus take the necessary prevention and adaptation measures. At the same time, industry is encouraged to improve environmental management.



For example, the Protocol sets out a specific regime for reporting on wastewater transfers, whether via a sewer, containers, tank trucks or any other means. Facilities that release wastewater directly to a water body, whether first treated at a facility wastewater treatment plant or not, also fall under the Protocol and will have to report their releases. Hence, a properly established and maintained register can enormously benefit water monitoring and assessment activities. In this connection, many Latin American and Caribbean countries have already made good progress in establishing national PRTRs and have made efforts to develop a regional system, which will become an important tool for transboundary water management.

### ***Background and contact information***

The Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs are open to accession by any United Nations Member State. As of 1 May 2013 the Convention has 46 Parties and the Protocol 32.

### **Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs**

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PRTR Global Portal: <http://www.ptr.net/>