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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

First session

Geneva, 20–22 April 2010

Report of the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

Contents

| | <i>Paragraphs</i> | <i>Page</i> |
|--|-------------------|-------------|
| Introduction..... | 1–7 | 3 |
| I. Organizational matters | 8–14 | 3 |
| A. Constitution of the Meeting of the Parties and opening of session. | 8 | 3 |
| B. Election of the Chair. | 9 | 4 |
| C. Adoption of the agenda..... | 10 | 4 |
| D. Adoption of the rules of procedure. | 11 | 4 |
| E. Election of officers and other Bureau members..... | 12–14 | 4 |
| II. Status of ratification of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. | 15 | 5 |
| III. General statements | 16–19 | 5 |
| IV. Procedures and mechanisms facilitating the implementation of the Protocol | 20–32 | 6 |
| A. Review of compliance, including composition of the proposed Compliance Committee | 20–22 | 6 |
| B. Financial arrangements | 23–27 | 6 |
| C. Establishment of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol | 28 | 7 |
| D. Reporting on implementation of the Protocol..... | 29–31 | 7 |
| E. Designation of focal points. | 32 | 7 |
| V. Programme of work and operation of the Protocol | 33–39 | 8 |

| | | | |
|-------|---|-------|----|
| A. | Procedures for the preparation, adoption and monitoring of work programmes, including the work programme for 2011–2014..... | 33–34 | 8 |
| B. | Financing of the work programme for 2011–2014 | 35–37 | 8 |
| C. | Other matters related to the work programme for 2011–2014..... | 38–39 | 8 |
| VI. | Capacity-building, technical assistance and awareness-raising..... | 40–47 | 9 |
| A. | Capacity-building and technical assistance needs and priorities..... | 40–43 | 9 |
| B. | Information tools | 44–46 | 9 |
| C. | Other measures. | 47 | 9 |
| VII. | Relevant developments and interlinkages | 48–53 | 10 |
| A. | Synergies between the Protocol, the Aarhus Convention and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements | 48–49 | 10 |
| B. | Global and regional developments on issues related to pollutant release and transfer registers..... | 50–53 | 10 |
| VIII. | Geneva Declaration..... | 54–55 | 10 |
| IX. | High-level segment | 56–64 | 11 |
| A. | Achievements, opportunities and challenges in establishing pollutant release and transfer registers..... | 58–60 | 11 |
| B. | Global and regional initiatives to promote the development of pollutant release and transfer registers..... | 61–64 | 14 |
| X. | Election of the members of the Compliance Committee..... | 65 | 15 |
| XI. | Date and venue of the second ordinary session..... | 66 | 16 |
| XII. | Any other business. | 67–68 | 16 |
| XIII. | Adoption of the report..... | 69 | 16 |

For practical reasons, the declaration and decisions adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at their first session is issued in an addendum to the present report (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/2/Add.1)

Introduction

1. The first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was held from 20 to 22 April 2010 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.
2. The session was attended by delegations from the following Parties to the Protocol: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Union (EU).
3. Representatives of 10 Signatories, Armenia, Austria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and another State from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region, Belarus, also participated.
4. One delegation from a United Nations Member State outside of the UNECE region, Mexico, also attended.
5. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also attended.
6. Representatives of regional environmental centres, Aarhus Centres, and business organizations also attended. In addition, representatives of international, regional and non-governmental environmental organizations participated in the session, many of which coordinated their input within the framework of the European ECO Forum.¹
7. A considerable number of registered participants, including from business organizations, had to cancel their participation due to the unprecedented air travel restrictions affecting Europe at the time. Some delegates who had been unable to travel to Geneva participated in the session by audio conference.

I. Organizational matters

A. Constitution of the Meeting of the Parties and opening of the session

8. Mr. Jan Dusík (Czech Republic), Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, opened the session. The Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol then approved the report on credentials,² prepared by the secretariat in accordance with the rules of procedure, which were formally adopted later in the session. Credentials submitted by the following Parties to the Protocol were deemed to be in order: Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

¹ All participants are included in the final list of participants which is available online at: www.unece.org/env/pp/mopp1.htm.

² The major disruption of air traffic resulting from the eruption of an Icelandic volcano had prevented many delegates from reaching Geneva. Later on during the session, it was confirmed that there was a quorum, as additional delegates managed to arrive in Geneva.

B. Election of the Chair

9. Mr. Michel Amand (Belgium), proposed by Spain on behalf of the EU and its member States, was elected to serve as Chair of the Meeting. Several delegations congratulated Mr. Amand on his election, noting his central role in the preparatory process for the meeting as Chair of the Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) since 2007.

C. Adoption of the agenda

10. The Meeting adopted by consensus the agenda of the session as set out in the annotated provisional agenda (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/1).

D. Adoption of the rules of procedure

11. The Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol adopted by consensus³ the rules of procedure for its sessions and those of its subsidiary bodies (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/L.2, Decision I/1), which had been prepared by the Working Group on PRTRs.

E. Election of officers and other Bureau members

12. The Chair noted that the rules of procedure envisaged a Bureau consisting of a Chair, two Vice-Chairs and four other members drawn from among the representatives of the Parties present at the meeting (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/L.2, rule 18, para. 1, and rule 22, para. 1). He invited nominations for the remaining positions on the Bureau.

13. After consultations, the Meeting elected by consensus the following candidates to serve on the Bureau until the end of the second session of the Meeting of the Parties: Mr. Lars Petter Bingham (Norway)⁴ and Mr. Bob Boyce (United Kingdom) as Vice-Chairs, and Mr. Jan Marsak (Czech Republic), Ms. Carmen Canales (Spain), Ms. Ingrid Ededahl (Sweden) and Ms. Marianne Wenning (EU) as further members, in addition to the Chair.

14. With regard to the possible involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the work of the Bureau, referred to in paragraph 2 of Decision I/1 on the rules of procedure, the European ECO Forum expressed its willingness to assist the deliberations of the Bureau and nominated Ms. Mary Taylor, Friends of the Earth Europe, as candidate to provide such assistance. The Meeting took note of that offer.

³ Owing to the lack of a quorum at the start of the meeting, all decisions taken were first adopted provisionally and were then formally adopted at the end of the meeting, by which time the necessary quorum for decision-making had been achieved. The text of the decisions adopted can be found in an addendum to the report (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/2/Add.1).

⁴ Due to the aforementioned air travel restrictions, Mr. Bingham participated in the session through an audiolink. This was considered to be sufficient to meet the requirement in rule 18, paragraph 1, of the provisionally adopted rules of procedure that candidates for Vice-Chair be "present" at the meeting.

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

15. The secretariat informed the Meeting about the status of ratification, acceptance, approval and accession with respect to the Protocol on PRTRs (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/3). It also provided information about declarations made by some Parties upon the deposit of their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. Delegations from States and regional economic integration organizations not yet party to the Protocol were offered an opportunity to briefly inform the Meeting of their plans to ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Protocol. Cyprus informed the Meeting that by the end of 2010 its ratification procedures would be completed.

III. General statements

16. Mr. Karel Blaha, Deputy Minister of the Environment of the Czech Republic, emphasized the importance of support from international organizations and of technical assistance in the process of implementing the Protocol, while also noting the relevance of the decisions that the Meeting of the Parties would discuss, as well as of the global activities that were being carried out.

17. Spain, on behalf of the EU and its member States, expressed to the Meeting its great satisfaction with the entry into force of the Protocol on 8 October 2009, only six years after its adoption in Kiev in 2003. Recognizing the considerable challenges that lay ahead in achieving implementation of the Protocol, compliance by the Parties was crucial to the Protocol's success. The EU and its member States committed themselves to work effectively and collaboratively with international organizations, individual countries, NGOs and civil society towards having well-established Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers in all countries that were committed to providing access to environmental information. They were willing to share the experience they had gained through implementation of the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register — put in place by Regulation (EC) 166/2006 of 18 January 2006 — which had already resulted in the submission of emissions data from Member states for 2007 and 2008. They looked forward to the ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs by the highest possible number of States, with the hope that the instrument would become one of the principal environmental information tools at the global level.

18. The Regional Environmental Center (REC) congratulated the Meeting and the Chair on the entry into force of the Protocol and reiterated its support for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and in South-Eastern Europe to assist them in implementing the Protocol.

19. The European ECO Forum also congratulated the Meeting upon the entry into force of the Protocol and hoped that it would consider candidates for membership on the Compliance Committee proposed by NGOs.

IV. Procedures and mechanisms facilitating the implementation of the Protocol

A. Review of compliance, including composition of the proposed Compliance Committee

20. The Meeting considered and adopted by consensus the decision on review of compliance (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/L.3, Decision I/2), which had been prepared by the Working Group on PRTRs.

21. The Meeting then turned to the question of the election of the Compliance Committee. The secretariat provided information on nominations of candidates that had been put forward by Parties to the Protocol, taking into account proposals for candidates made by a Signatory and various NGOs in accordance with a procedure broadly in line with paragraph 4 of the annex to the decision on review of compliance. Ten candidates had been nominated, all of whom were nationals of countries that were Parties or Signatories. Taking into account that there were nine seats on the Committee, consultations facilitated by a Vice-Chair of the Meeting of the Parties were held with a view to reaching consensus on the composition of the Committee.

22. Keeping in mind the importance of transparency and effective implementation of the nomination procedure set out in the decision on review of compliance, the Meeting invited Signatories and NGOs qualified or having an interest in the fields related to the Protocol to make their proposals for candidates available to the secretariat in future for publication on the Protocol's website and communication to the Parties. That would, inter alia, enable the Parties to take due account of any such proposals when making nominations. In making their proposals, Signatories and NGOs were invited to observe the procedure and in particular the timeline for nominations by Parties, as set out in paragraph 5 of the annex to decision I/2 on review of compliance.

B. Financial arrangements

23. In accordance with article 17, paragraph 2 (h), of the Protocol, the Meeting was invited to consider a draft decision on financial arrangements prepared by the Working Group on PRTRs (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/L.4).

24. The Chair outlined a number of options available to solve the only point in the draft decision on which the Working Group had been unable to reach consensus, related to the preamble and to paragraph 9, concerning the practice of providing financial support to facilitate the participation of environmental NGOs in the meetings under the Protocol.

25. The Meeting discussed the draft text, revised it and adopted by consensus the decision on financial arrangements (Decision I/3).

26. Furthermore, it was agreed that the practice developed under the Aarhus Convention of routinely providing financial support through the UNECE Local Technical Cooperation Trust Fund to facilitate the participation of environmental NGOs in meetings held under the auspices of the Convention should apply to meetings held under the auspices of the Protocol, subject to the availability of funds.

27. Following the proposal made by Spain on behalf of the EU and its member States, the Meeting mandated the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol (see below) to consider the need to formalize the practice of providing financial support to facilitate the participation of environmental NGOs, on the basis of experience gained under the

Convention and the Protocol, and to report back to the second session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on that issue.

C. Establishment of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol

28. The Meeting considered and adopted by consensus the decision on the establishment of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/L.5, Decision I/4), a subsidiary body that would be entrusted with overseeing the implementation of the work programme of the Protocol between the sessions of the Meeting of the Parties. The draft decision had been prepared by the Working Group on PRTRs.

D. Reporting on implementation of the Protocol

29. The Meeting considered the draft decision on reporting on implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/L.6), annexing a format for the Parties to use in their reporting, which had been prepared by the Working Group.

30. The secretariat drew the Meeting's attention to the resource implications of paragraph 8 (a) of the draft decision, which would require the national reports to be made available in the three official languages. A similar requirement had been made at the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention with respect to the national implementation reports under the Convention. However, after two reporting cycles, the Parties to the Aarhus Convention were considering the need for additional funds to cover the costs of producing the documents in the three official languages or the possibility of abandoning the practice of producing the reports in the three languages, and that discussion was still ongoing. It was highlighted that none of the secretariats of the other environmental conventions administered by UNECE produced national implementation reports in the three languages, and that under the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents only a small number of implementation reports were translated into English informally by using those Conventions' trust funds.

31. The Meeting decided not to revise the draft text and by consensus adopted the decision on reporting on implementation of the Protocol (Decision I/5). However, it took note of the risk that in order to fulfil the requirement of paragraph 8 (a), the Protocol's trust fund would need to be used to finance the translations. It also agreed to review its position at its second session, based on the experience gained through the activities under both the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol.

E. Designation of focal points

32. The Chair invited delegations to refer to decision I/9 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention on the designation of focal points (ECE/MP.PP/2/Add.10). In order to facilitate communication concerning matters related to the Protocol, the Meeting of the Parties invited Parties, Signatories, other interested States and other concerned stakeholders to designate focal points for the Protocol if they had not already done so.

V. Programme of work and operation of the Protocol

A. Procedures for the preparation, adoption and monitoring of work programmes, including the work programme for 2011-2014

33. In accordance with article 17, paragraph 2 (c), of the Protocol, the Meeting considered and adopted by consensus a decision on procedures for the preparation, adoption and monitoring of work programmes under the Protocol, annexing a work programme covering the period up to and including the next session of the Meeting (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/L.7, Decision I/6). The draft decision had been prepared by the Bureau of the Working Group on PRTRs, on the basis of an earlier draft prepared by the Working Group (see ECE/MP.PP/AC.1/2008/2, paras. 23–25). The Chair explained the changes introduced by the Bureau in relation to the earlier draft.

34. The secretariat explained that both core and overall cost estimates would be covered by the Protocol's trust fund, that core amounts were intended to reflect the minimum required to implement the activities and that the overall amounts reflected the desired level of support by the Parties. The secretariat noted that it would report to each session of the Meeting of the Parties on the way the funds would be spent.

B. Financing of the work programme for 2011-2014

35. To gather information on the means of financing the work programme, Parties, Signatories, other interested States and regional economic integration organizations were invited to inform the Meeting of their intention to contribute to the financial resources of the Protocol under the proposed voluntary scheme of contributions envisaged in the decision on financial arrangements, including the amount and, where possible, the timing of the expected contribution.

36. Norway indicated that it intended to contribute, but was not able to indicate the exact amount yet. Sweden tentatively envisaged a contribution of \$5,000 for 2010. The Czech Republic said it would contribute \$10,000 per year for the 2011-2014 period. Switzerland anticipated a contribution of 20,000 CHF per year as of 2010. Latvia hoped to contribute €1,000 for 2010. France envisaged contributing \$40,000 per year.

37. The Meeting took note of the information.

C. Other matters related to the work programme for 2011-2014

38. The Meeting of the Parties discussed the need to develop a strategic plan, in light of the reference to such a plan in paragraph 9 of the decision on procedures for the preparation, adoption and monitoring of work programmes.

39. Some delegations stressed that such a plan should set long-term goals, and priorities relating to those goals. The Chair noted that through decision I/6, the Meeting mandated the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol to consider the need for such a plan and, if deemed necessary, to take steps to prepare a draft for eventual adoption by the Meeting of the Parties.

VI. Capacity-building, technical assistance and awareness-raising

A. Capacity-building and technical assistance needs and priorities

40. The secretariat presented an overview of ongoing and planned capacity-building activities concerning pollutant release and transfer registers, as reflected in the matrix of those activities that was initially prepared under the auspices of the Working Group on PRTRs, as well as of efforts made to coordinate those activities.⁵ Delegations were invited to provide feedback on the matrix.

41. Representatives of Parties, Signatories, other interested States, in particular those from countries with economies in transition, and relevant stakeholders shared their views on their needs and priorities for capacity-building related to PRTRs. The theme was also addressed during the high-level segment under agenda item 14.

42. The European ECO-Forum, on behalf of the NGOs present, presented software that had been developed with the aim of making PRTRs simpler and more accessible. The software had been successfully tested in Kazakhstan.

43. The Meeting noted that the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol had recommended that the Meeting of the Parties, at its first session, should mandate the secretariat to look into the possible need for a technical assistance mechanism, using a questionnaire to gather information and opinions, and thereafter analysing the results and reporting back to the Working Group (ECE/MP.PP/AC.1/2008/2, paragraph 24 (a)). The Meeting considered that recommendation and decided to mandate the Bureau to develop the aforementioned questionnaire with the support of the secretariat.

B. Information tools

44. The secretariat presented several information tools designed to foster capacity-building and awareness-raising with regard to the Protocol, including PRTR.net and the Aarhus clearinghouse mechanism.

45. Spain, on behalf of the EU and its member States, emphasized the importance of the development of electronic reporting tools, noting that the use of such tools significantly benefited the collection of Parties' reports on implementation and improved public access to environmental information. The creation of a common format for collecting implementation reports would be extremely valuable. The EU and its member States offered their experience in designing and developing such a system.

46. The Chair invited Parties and other stakeholders to promote the use of those tools.

C. Other measures

47. The secretariat informed the Meeting of progress made with the UNECE project concerning a cost model for the establishment of PRTRs in accordance with the requirements of the Protocol. Representatives of Parties, Signatories and other interested States and other relevant stakeholders presented further information on such activities. The Meeting took note of and indicated its support for the activities.

⁵ The matrix is available at <http://apps.unece.org/ehlm/pp/NIR/PRTRreports.asp>.

VII. Relevant developments and interlinkages

A. Synergies between the Protocol, the Aarhus Convention and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements

48. The secretariat informed the Meeting of ongoing and planned activities under the Aarhus Convention and other multilateral environmental agreements having relevance to those under the Protocol. Delegations presented supplementary information.

49. The Meeting agreed to explore ways of further promoting synergies between the Protocol, the Aarhus Convention and other multilateral environmental agreements.

B. Global and regional developments on issues related to pollutant release and transfer registers

50. Representatives of bodies involved in global or regional activities related to the development and implementation of PRTRs informed the Meeting of those activities.

51. The UNEP representative congratulated the secretariat, the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and the Parties to the Protocol for achieving an historic milestone. UNEP hosted the secretariats of several legally binding international environmental agreements which were specifically oriented towards chemicals and a number of those instruments specifically cited PRTRs as a tool which could help to achieve their goals. 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 specific linkages between the PRTR Protocol and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants were highlighted. In that connection, there was also a need to avoid duplication.

52. The OECD representative introduced OECD activities on PRTRs, which were included under the OECD Environment, Health and Safety programme that had started in the early 1970s. The OECD Task Force on PRTR had been established under the Environmental Policy Committee to oversee the relevant work on PRTRs. The outcomes of the OECD 2009 survey on PRTR implementation were presented, as were the activities and outcomes of the PRTR Task Force. At its next meeting, the Task Force would address, inter alia, a project on releases from products and future activities.

53. The Meeting also took note of the report of the secretariat on the activities of the International Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers Coordinating Group⁶. Those matters were discussed further during the high-level segment under agenda item 15.

VIII. Geneva Declaration

54. The Meeting considered a draft Geneva Declaration (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/L.1), containing a statement of commitment and of principles with regard to the Protocol,

⁶ Currently, UNECE provides secretariat support to the International Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers Coordinating Group.

including through cooperation to implement priority activities. The draft was prepared by the Bureau in coordination with the secretariat, in accordance with a procedure agreed by the Working Group on PRTRs at its sixth meeting (ECE/MP.PP/AC.1/2008/2, para. 32), taking into account comments received from Parties and other stakeholders.

55. The delegations revised the draft and adopted the Geneva Declaration by consensus.⁷

IX. High-level segment⁸

56. The high-level segment of the session was opened and chaired by Mr. Philippe Henry, the Walloon Minister for the Environment. Mr. Andrey Vasilyev, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary, delivered a welcome address on behalf of Mr. Ján Kubiš, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Executive Secretary of UNECE. Noting that the Protocol established a new international benchmark in securing public access to information on threats posed to the environment by toxic emissions, he highlighted that the Protocol enabled citizens to find out about the major sources of polluting emissions in their immediate neighbourhoods simply by using the Internet. The present session brought to an end a seven-year preparatory journey and would launch the next phase of the work, focused on the practical implementation and the expansion of the geographical scope of the Protocol as more States would become Parties.⁹

57. Mr. Jan Dusik, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, also in an opening address, noted that it was vital for the public to have easy access to information in order to facilitate its participation in matters relating to the environment. The value of the Protocol lay in its multi-stakeholder approach, which made it a useful and effective tool in achieving goals in various areas of international environmental governance, including chemicals management and climate change. There was a need to strive for the broadest possible implementation of the Protocol in as many countries as possible. It was also important to bear in mind that resources applied to the Protocol's implementation yielded multiple benefits for Governments, the private sector and the public.¹⁰

A. Achievements, opportunities and challenges in establishing pollutant release and transfer registers

58. Ministers and Heads of delegation of Parties, Signatories and other States, as well as leading representatives of international, regional and non-governmental organizations and the private sector then highlighted past experiences and future challenges in relation to PRTRs. The segment included selected presentations, panel discussions and a general debate. Video and audio link facilities were provided for the participation of some panellists.

⁷ The declaration is included in an addendum to this report (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/2/Add.1).

⁸ See texts of the statements delivered at the high-level segment at:
<http://www.unece.org/env/pp/mopp1.htm>

⁹ The full text of the statement is available at
http://www.unece.org/press/execsec/2010/jk_20_22April_2010.htm

¹⁰ The full text of the statement is available at http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2010/pp/MoPP-1-HLS/Dusik_HLS_MOP1_FIN.pdf.

1. Panel discussion

59. Panellists were invited to present their views on the achievements, opportunities and challenges in establishing pollutant release and transfer registers:

(a) A representative from the Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission noted that the increasing use of the European PRTR (E-PRTR) ensured participation of citizens in environmental matters and policymaking. Moreover, its multimedia and integrated approach provided a valuable overview of the major environmental pressures from industrial activities. Geographic information systems (GIS) tools had been used to visualize collected data, and a web tool had been launched in November 2009 to gather environmental information on emissions from some 25,000 facilities in the EU. The E-PRTR already represented a significant achievement for industry, NGOs and the competent authorities and would be further improved by integrating data on releases from diffuse sources such as transport, shipping, aviation and domestic combustion;

(b) Mr. Raimonds Vejonis, Minister of the Environment of Latvia, in a video presentation, observed that the Protocol allowed access to information not only on the situation of a particular country, but on those of other countries as well. The Implementation of the Protocol required the generation of adequate and easily accessible information in order to guarantee the public's ability to obtain information on pollution and its impact on human health. In that regard, the Latvian PRTR included a resource that provided clear and easily understandable information to the public on the impacts on human health of different pollutants, as well as information on contaminated and potentially contaminated areas. The Protocol had the potential to become one of the most effective tools for providing environmental information to society;

(c) The Vice Director of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment explained that, since 2009, Switzerland's PRTR had been providing public information on releases of specific pollutants to air, water or land, as well as on transfers of waste and of pollutants in wastewater. He highlighted the importance of communication in gaining stakeholders' support and involving them in political, organizational and technical developments. The Federal Office's goal was to make sure that all stakeholders were aware of the tool and used it to its full potential;

(d) The Director General of Air Quality and Industrial Environment at the Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs of Spain said that the Spanish PRTR system was designed as an integrated online tool for the gathering, management and dissemination of data, providing the public with access to facility inventories, general information about the PRTR register and relevant documents and links. The Ministry's goal was to help the public to better understand and use the information provided through the PRTR system and to improve the quality and comparability of data, as well as the procedures for supplying information. PRTR data had been particularly important for setting the priorities and the main objectives of several environmental policies and had been used, for example, to evaluate needs in the implementation of environmental liability legislation. The Spanish Environment Ministry stood ready to cooperate in this area with other countries, especially those in Latin America;

(e) A representative of the Croatian Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva intervened on behalf of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction of Croatia, setting out the procedure followed by Croatia to establish a national environmental pollution registry. The Croatian PRTR was currently part of the Croatian Environment Agency's website, where the data was available to the public; however a separate PRTR website would be created where even more collected information would be made available to the public, which would enable Croatia to produce appropriate

Environmental Performance Review reports to the European Commission when it joined the EU;

(f) A representative of Friends of the Earth Europe made a number of observations, including on the usefulness of mapping as featured in the United Kingdom's PRTR system; and the fact that the United Kingdom's Environmental Agency went beyond the requirements of the UNECE Protocol and also requested data on commercial outputs and the use of energy, water and raw materials, in order to develop a tool for companies to help improve efficiency. Combining PRTR data with other information could be a powerful tool to help citizens challenge pollution permits and planning applications. PRTR systems could start in a relatively simple form and then evolve and benefit from synergies with other data sets. Regulators, businesses, researchers, and citizens had much information to share and all benefited from having a healthy, vibrant PRTR community;

(g) The Director General of Air Quality Management and Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers of the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico, introducing the Mexican PRTR, noted that it covered 104 substances and was the first publicly accessible instrument for information on pollution in Mexico. Reducing industrial emissions of hazardous substances contributed to building credibility and trust in Government. Among the challenges ahead was the inclusion of more toxic and eco-toxic substances, the development of a new online platform and the establishment of an automatic information review to optimize information processing and increase the reliability and consistency of information. Mexico was willing to share its experience in implementing and updating its PRTR;

(h) The Chief Inspector of Environmental Protection of Poland reported that although Poland was not yet a party to the Protocol, it was undertaking preparatory work to become a Party and to implement the Protocol. The PRTR regulations had been approved and regional inspectorates had been designated as the responsible authority. Subsequently, a website portal and an electronic system for data processing and reporting had been created and methodological guides had been prepared for different industrial sectors. The Polish PRTR might also substantially improve the effectiveness of the national system of environmental fees and penalties that was already in place by cross-checking and validating the relevant data. In addition, a mature PRTR might encourage companies to fully meet their obligation to report to the responsible authority;

(i) A representative of the Federal Environment Agency of Germany reported that Germany had been providing PRTR information to the public since June 2009, providing an opportunity for industrial actors to communicate their efforts and achievements for a healthier environment. PRTRs created more transparency and improved access to environmental information, thereby supporting the dialogue between the public, politicians and industry. The German electronic PRTR had become part of Germany's e-government 2.0 initiative and had been acknowledged by the European Commission as a best practice example of e-government in Europe. The electronic PRTR was programmed completely with open source software, involving no licence fees, and all participants were invited to use it or help improve it and share the results. The software and interfaces would be published on the Semantic Interoperability Centre Europe (SEMIC.EU) website at <http://www.semic.eu/semic/view/Asset/Asset.SingleView.xhtml?id=59649>;

(j) A Senior Adviser at the Climate and Pollution Agency of Norway delivered a detailed presentation of the Norwegian PRTR, which covered emissions into the air and water, as well as waste from industrial activities. He explained how the data flow from industry and landfills to the PRTR was set up and how emissions from transport were also included in the system;

(k) A Senior Expert from the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) intervened on behalf of the Executive Director of REC, sharing experience with capacity-building in countries in South-Eastern Europe (SEE) and presenting several recommendations on the effective creation of PRTR systems. The main challenges and needs with respect to the development of PRTRs in SEE countries included the legislative burden and the institutional framework necessary for the integration of data collection and the flow of information. Among planned future activities, the REC would provide assistance with preparations for ratification of the Protocol; awareness-raising workshops and trainings for authorities, industry and NGOs; and a pilot project on capacity building funded by the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC);

(l) The Director of the Information Centre "Volgrad-Ecopress" in the Russian Federation explained the challenges and their solutions to the creation of PRTRs. Among other issues, she highlighted the importance of correct data collection; e-governance; systemic and consistent reporting also by the private sector; in-service trainings and other educational opportunities; and language problems of PRTR systems. Specific reference was made to the experience of NGOs in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

2. General debate

60. In the general debate on the same topic, delegations commented on their experiences in establishing or working with PRTRs and on the opportunities and challenges involved. Some speakers expressed an interest in assessing the influence of pollutants on biodiversity and strengthening support for networking and exchanging information. The importance of PRTRs in competitive analyses of companies was also highlighted.

B. Global and regional initiatives to promote the development of pollutant release and transfer registers

61. The Meeting next discussed global and regional initiatives to promote the development of PRTRs, hearing selected presentations and a panel discussion, followed by a general debate.

1. Panel discussion

62. Panellists were invited to present their views on global and regional initiatives to promote the development of PRTRs:

(a) The Chair of the International PRTR Coordinating Group and Associate Director of UNITAR recalled the historical milestones of the PRTR process since the Rio Summit of 1992, explaining how the PRTR concept had emerged. UNEP, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization and OECD, among others, had all been involved in the process and in the activities undertaken over the years, such as the organization of a major conference on PRTRs in 1998 by Japan and the OECD with the collaboration of UNEP and UNITAR. A global momentum was developing with an increasing number of success stories. The first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the PRTR Protocol provided an excellent opportunity to enhance the dialogue with and between countries;

(b) Mr. Michel Amand, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the PRTR Protocol, intervened in his capacity as Chair of the OECD Task Force on PRTRs. The OECD Task Force, created in 1999, annually gathered experts dealing with the implementation of PRTRs in OECD countries, as well as representatives of institutions, industry and NGOs, for the purpose of exchanging information and experience. Important

progress had been made in the past years with the implementation of PRTRs, including the entry into force of the UNECE Protocol and the creation of the EU Regulation on PRTRs. The OECD had also contributed to the expansion of PRTRs through the publication of guidance materials and technical documentation, publicly available through the Resource Centre for PRTR Release Estimation Techniques. Those activities had been enhanced through the creation of an Internet portal on PRTRs, maintained by Grid Arendal with the financial support of the Aarhus Convention trust fund and under supervision of the UNECE. The OECD was also developing a GIS tool to better visualize available data on pollutant releases and transfers and to improve the comparability of collected data, which would contribute to a better assessment of the application of the Protocol. The synergies and cooperation between the OECD and the UNECE were remarkable and it was hoped that cooperation between the two institutions, as well as the involvement of stakeholders in the work, would be further strengthened and serve to consolidate the “Right to Know”;

(c) A representative of UNITAR, intervening on behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), reported that the strategic objectives of the Central American Environmental Plan 2010-2014 included the promotion of citizen participation and public/private partnerships, as well as a reduction of contamination through actions such as implementing PRTRs in the region and promoting a regional agreement on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. The development of national PRTR systems had already started in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, with the support of the United States Agency for International Development, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, CCAD and UNITAR. The Spanish Government had also provided financial support to continue the implementation of PRTR registers and other related activities, mainly in Central America;

(d) A Senior Programme Officer from the UNEP-Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) secretariat explained that SAICM was a broad global policy framework focused on achieving the goal of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation: that by 2020 chemicals would be produced and used in ways that minimized significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment. SAICM’s broad and diverse constituency included over 170 Governments and more than 70 NGOs, as well as various United Nations organizations. The secretariat of the Aarhus Convention served as an official focal point. Effective governance, knowledge and information were at the centre of SAICM, as well as of the Aarhus Convention and its PRTR Protocol. SAICM supported capacity-building in developing countries, least developed countries, small island developing States and countries with economies in transition, awarding \$20 million in the past four years. PRTR projects had been granted in Georgia and Panama and an increasing number of countries were considering and addressing the topic of PRTRs in the context of broader SAICM implementation plans. There were also opportunities for stakeholders to consider nominating relevant PRTR-related issues that might be considered emerging policy issues, by November 2010, ahead of the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. SAICM recognized PRTRs as a solid part of the global chemicals management agenda and was ready to work together in building upon the successes so far achieved and marked by this first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

2. General debate

63. In the general debate that followed, several delegations stressed the need to continue working on the comparability of data, the further exchange of information, capacity-building and communication strategies.

64. The Chair closed the discussion by noting the promising potential of the projects and synergies mentioned during the interventions.

X. Election of the members of the Compliance Committee

65. On the basis of consultations (see para. 21 above), the Meeting elected by consensus the following candidates to the Compliance Committee to serve until the end of the second session of the Meeting: Mr. Merab Barbakadze (Georgia); Mr. Akos Fehervary (Hungary); Mr. Sveto Vasileski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia); and Mr. Alistair McGlone (United Kingdom). The following candidates were elected by consensus to serve on the Committee until the end of the third session of the Meeting: Mr. Gor Movsisyan (Armenia); Mr. Fritz Kroiss (Austria); Ms. Martina Sorsa (Croatia); Mr. Didier Guiffault (France); and Ms. Barbara Rathmer (Germany).

XI. Date and venue of the second ordinary session

66. With regard to the requirement under article 17 of the Protocol that ordinary sessions of the Meeting be held sequentially with, or parallel to, ordinary sessions of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, unless otherwise decided by the Parties to the Protocol, it was agreed that the second session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol would be held back to back with the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, at a date as yet to be determined.

XII. Any other business

67. In response to a number of enquiries, the secretariat informed the Meeting about the internal problems with Document Management Services at the United Nations in Geneva, which had impeded the timely processing of the meeting documents, although they had been submitted by the secretariat in a timely manner for processing. Only after an extensive exchange of correspondence and various meetings, involving also the UNECE Executive Secretary and the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and their cabinets, the documents had been processed just one week before the first session. That had caused the significant delay in the availability of the documents, in particular the French and Russian versions.

68. France and Belgium, supported by Luxembourg and Switzerland, recalled that multilingualism at the United Nations, including the availability of multilingual documents, was the subject of General Assembly resolution 63/306 of 30 September 2009. They expressed regret at the absence of French translations of official documents by the time foreseen by the rules of procedure of the governing bodies of the Convention and the Protocol, namely at least six weeks before the opening of the session of the Meeting of the Parties. They requested the Executive Secretary of the UNECE to be particularly vigilant in ensuring the application of the rules concerning interpretation and the translation of documents in the framework of the Protocol, as outlined in rules 10, 25 (b) and (c), 44 and 46 of the rules of procedure. They also requested the secretariat to inform them of the progress made and measures taken in that regard.

XIII. Adoption of the report

69. The Meeting requested the secretariat to circulate a draft of the meeting report to all delegations providing a short commenting period, following which the Chair and the Bureau, together with the secretariat, would finalize the report.
