

**European ECO Forum statement for the Third session of the  
Meeting of Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and  
Transfer Registers  
Budva, September 15, 2017**

**Delivered by Ms. Mara Silina – co-chair European ECO Forum**

**Dear Madam Chair, Ministers, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and  
Gentlemen**

The European ECO Forum welcomes ratification of the PRTR Protocol by Malta and Ukraine but is very disappointed that there are still many countries in the UNECE which have not ratified or acceded to it. We urge governments of these countries to make the ratification of the PRTR Protocol a priority.

The main objective of the PRTR Protocol is “to enhance public access to information through the establishment of coherent, integrated, nationwide pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs) in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol; which could facilitate public participation in environmental decision-making as well as contribute to the prevention and reduction of pollution of the environment”. The work on developing such registers has started but needs to be intensified and further developed. We fully support the Budva Declaration calling upon “ *...Parties and signatories to develop and further operate efficient user-friendly pollutant release and transfer registers, to further raise awareness about them and to ensure that people everywhere have convenient and digital access to relevant information on releases of hazardous substances and the transfer of waste. We also recognize the need to address the problem of chemical substances in products and their releases into the environment*”. We hope that countries will take up this work seriously.

Every day hazardous chemical substances are released into the environment from industrial and other sites and PRTRs are to help to effectively record these pollutants and make this information accessible to the public making PRTRs not a static inventories but constantly changing (dynamic) systems. Adopted fourteen years ago PRTR Protocol covers only 86 substances, which does not correspond to current situation. Therefore, the European ECO Forum calls on the Parties to the PRTR Protocol to start working on a revision of the list of pollutants in Annex II, as well as activities under the Annex I, and expand these lists according to the current realities with new hazardous chemicals and new activities. Parties should look for ways to lower existing thresholds in order to make sure that also smaller facilities which release hazardous substances below existing thresholds fall under the reporting obligations. By doing so, Parties would finally be able to achieve the goals agreed on in the Strategic Plan 2015-2020 – Focal area III – Development of the Protocol.

The European ECO Forum also calls Parties and Signatories to tackle the issue of obsolete storage places of different pollutants and other hazardous materials which pose a serious threat to human health and the environment. This is a serious problem particularly but not exclusively in EECCA countries. Obsolete storage places continue to pollute air, water and soil without anybody being held accountable.

Although progress has been made in implementation of the PRTR Protocol in countries, many challenges remain and we encourage Parties and Signatories to step up their efforts in this area. The document “Systemic issues concerning the implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and recommendation on how to address them” developed by the Protocol’s Compliance Committee provides useful recommendations and can be used as a guidance. In particular, the user-friendliness of the existing PRTR/data portals should be improved and ensure it serves to promote benchmarking and progress in environmental performance of industries, allows identifying hotspots and priorities for prevention measures as well as fostering compliance promotion in a timely manner through more pro-active access to information before the decisions are taken.

We are very disappointed that, despite increased international cooperation and efforts made by the Secretariat, some Parties and other organisations, none of the countries outside the UNECE region have ratified the PRTR Protocol, leaving the Focal area II of the Protocol’s Strategic plan not accomplished.