



## **International PRTR Coordinating Group**

### **Eight meeting**

Friday, 22 November 2013, Geneva

### **REPORT<sup>1</sup>**

1. The meeting of the International PRTR Coordinating Group (ICG) was attended by representatives of the following countries and organizations: Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, European Union, Germany, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom (UK), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ECOSCOPE, and European Environment Bureau (EEB) / European ECO-Forum. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Iñigo de Vicente-Mingarro (Spain), and serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

#### **I. Adoption of the agenda**

2. The participants adopted provisional agenda for the meeting as was presented by the Chair.

#### **II. Overview of PRTR initiatives**

3. The participants agreed that the Global round table on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs), held on 19 November 2013 in Geneva, provided a great opportunity for the exchange of experiences on PRTRs and was indeed successful. The Chair of the Bureau of the Protocol on PRTRs also confirmed the Bureau's support to the round table and its willingness to organize a similar joint meeting in the future.

4. Several participants suggested to consider a more flexible format for the next round table, such as for example, to allow more time for interactive discussions rather than for presentations and also to introduce bilateral sessions on capacity building needs between the countries with the extended PRTR expertise and the countries requiring expert support. It was also suggested to involve a more diverse representation from countries with economies in transition, as many different stakeholders are involved in PRTR-related activities in these countries and their active engagement in the round table may then enhance coordination at national level.

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<sup>1</sup> This document was not formally edited.

**a) Map of PRTR initiatives**

5. The Chair presented a draft map that demonstrates the level of implementation of PRTRs in different countries.

6. The participants welcomed this initiative and suggested that the map should be kept under continuous review in order to reflect the latest updates. It was also suggested to include criteria for the map colors in order to inform users about the meaning of different colours and thereby to demonstrate progress in countries. Furthermore, it was suggested to link national PRTR webpages to the respective countries shown on the map. Participants agreed that the map constitutes an informal source of information and that the appropriate disclaimer should be included when the map will be made public on PRTR:Learn. Participants also provided a number of comments with regard to the status of PRTRs in specific countries, as outlined in the following paragraphs.

7. Colombia is planning to implement PRTRs as the country is in the accession process to the OECD.

8. Morocco formally expressed its interest in a possible accession to the Protocol on PRTRs through the recommendations to the Moroccan authorities outlined in the Environmental Performance Review of Morocco, presented at the nineteenth session of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy (22-25 October 2013, Geneva)<sup>2</sup>.

9. Brazil started PRTR design process in 2007, through a gradual implementation process regarding capacitation and communication of PRTR. The first year of report was 2010. Data will be available after the validation and certification of the program, intended to be in 2015, since the declaration form was recently improved to attended accreditation task. Brazil also expressed its interest in joining the ICG.

10. Implementation of PRTRs by Iceland, South Korea and Thailand should be properly reflected in the map, as well as by Indonesia that has a polluters' register, but no classification per chemical.

11. South Africa has a pollution reporting system but the data is not available for the public yet.

12. China has a reporting system on chemical releases and exposure information, called PRTR (where last R goes for Report, not Register). The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency provided financial support to China to support a project related to PRTRs. At the same time, a document on the implementation of the PRTR system in Sweden was developed by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under this project; the document will be uploaded in PRTR:Learn. The Swedish EPA plans a study tour for Chinese experts and it recently organised a workshop

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<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/cep/CEP-19/CEP-19EPR.MA.IP.6.e.pdf>

in China on the subject of the country's emissions of non-ferrous industry, with the focus on emissions of mercury. Germany plans a high level meeting to inform the Chinese delegation about the German PRTR. Belgium was contacted by the representatives of the Chinese textile industry.

13. The secretariat of the Aarhus Convention and several representatives of the Convention's Parties had a mission to Mongolia in 2012 which witnessed, among other matters, that the infrastructure required for implementing PRTRs is very poor and, at the same time, a number of mining activities with no reporting on emissions were identified by stakeholders during the mission. UNITAR informed that Mongolia shows interest to implement a PRTR and that the proposal for PRTR design in Mongolia was submitted to the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) Quick Start Programme Trust Fund (QSPTF) for consideration.

#### **b) Presentations by representatives of countries and organizations**

14. Honduras requires training on estimation techniques on how to interpret data and on validation of data and on preparing a final report, as well as assistance on deciding on regional thresholds and estimation techniques.

15. With regards to deciding on fixing levels for the country's subnational thresholds for chemicals, the UK recommends to make analysis of commercial importance of each industrial activity and the respective chemicals in use in that territory. This allows setting priorities regarding substances that are more likely to have an impact on the local environment and health of population.

16. Brazil has a law which provides for a mandatory PRTR. The country works currently on how to move data from the database to the website. The country expects to make the online data public in 2015.

17. ECOSCOPE NGO informed that major difficulties related to implementation of PRTRs in Azerbaijan include development of the appropriate legislation and raising of public interest in the matter. There is a pilot project on PRTRs supported by UNITAR, and with financial support of the SAICM QSPTF, and it is hoped that the successfully implementation of the project will lead to the ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs by Azerbaijan.

18. It was suggested that workshops with the engagement of international experts aimed at PRTR-related topics (e.g. estimation techniques) responding to countries needs could be an effective tool to promote PRTRs in countries that require expert assistance. In this respect EEB informed that it organised workshops for civil society on how to make use of information from PRTRs and it offered to share this experience with the interested countries.

### III. OUTCOMES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

19. Participants reported on implementation of several outcomes of the previous meeting as outlined in the following paragraphs.

20. UNEP shared a poster that illustrates the impact of harmful chemicals on health with countries and partner organizations. This poster was also made available during the Global Round Table on PRTRs held the 19 November 2013 in Geneva.

21. UNEP reported that PRTRs were promoted through the negotiation process on a legally binding instrument on mercury, thereby ensuring the reflection of PRTRs in the text of the instrument.

22. Sweden confirmed that it will make its report on PRTR implementation, also available in English, public and will share it with the ICG.

23. Switzerland presented the lessons learned with regard to an awareness raising campaign on PRTRs in the country, which started in February 2013. The campaign included several press releases, a publication and articles in the press, which were dedicated to PRTRs' technical aspects, their importance for general public and the related success stories. Website visits showed that the peak in the queries per month coincided with the time when the press releases were issued in major Swiss newspapers. Website visits also increased at the time of publishing the country's national implementation report for public consultations. The report is due to be submitted to the second Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs (2-4 July 2014, Maastricht, the Netherlands). Examples of success stories included information about a facility that changed a solvent used in the production process to reduce the facilities emissions. The PRTR dataset provided the factual information about a positive impact of this measure and showed that the company reduced releases drastically. It has proven to be useful when fact sheets contain more detailed information about emissions and production processes and are made online on the companies' webpages.

24. Norway stated that the data on visits to the Swiss PRTR-website is quite similar to what was observed in Norway.

25. UK informed that its report on PRTRs is at the final stage of verification and will be made available for public use soon.

26. OECD will further seek a possibility to make available its PRTR related material to a broader audience as to facilitate its use by countries which will further improve their PRTRs via, for example, the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals toolbox (IOMC-toolbox<sup>3</sup>) for decision-making in chemicals management.

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://iomctoolbox.oecd.org/>

27. Countries will continue keeping UNITAR, UNEP, OECD, UNECE and Global Environment Facility (GEF) informed on their bilateral PRTR-related cooperation with developing countries and with countries with economies in transition.

28. Countries and organizations will seek a possibility to support future GEF projects on PRTRs.

#### **IV. PRTR HOT-TOPICS**

29. Participants addressed a number of the selected hot-topics as outlined in the below paragraphs.

30. UNITAR informed about its vision regarding the integration of information on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) to PRTRs. It is proposed that PRTR contains a dedicated to POPs section which should include all kinds of sources which release POPs to the environment throughout the life cycle of products. The suggestion to include POPs into PRTRs is currently explored by Chile, however not yet fully integrated in the country's single window approach on environmental reporting.

31. Another example is data for storage of Dioxins, which is a part of the chemicals inventory in Norway. Norway also plans to include information on Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and Hexachlorobenzene (HCB) in its PRTR. However, it should be noted that the PRTR data, as collected under the national regulations to implement the Protocol on PRTRs, is not of great use in this regard. Current thresholds for the concerned substances would require only two facilities in Norway to report. Lower thresholds would increase the number of reporting facilities and thus provide a more detailed picture on actual emissions on PCBs and HCB. The participants noted that the UNEP toolkit on POPs, which was developed for the Stockholm Convention on POPs, could support a better integration of data on storage of POPs into PRTRs.

32. UNEP reported on the developments related to the Minamata Convention on Mercury: Four years ago the ICG prepared a document, entitled "Pollutant release and transfer register as a reporting mechanism for mercury releases and transfers"<sup>4</sup> which helped to clearly reference PRTRs in the Minamata Convention. The first Conference of the Parties of the Minamata Convention will decide on how to report on mercury emissions and PRTR systems are very well placed in this regard.

33. Further, UNEP informed about the Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) Working Group<sup>5</sup>. There was a ZDHC group formed, which encompasses representatives of leading companies in the global textile, apparel and footwear sector. UNEP has been in contact with the ZDHC group through its SAICM related work on Chemicals in Products information exchange. The aim of the ZDHC group is to put to zero the discharge of several chemical substances till 2020. PRTR is considered by the group an excellent candidate as the mechanism for disclosing information on those released chemicals to the

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<sup>4</sup> [www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/WGprep.1/Documents/k10\\_2%29/English/WG\\_Prep\\_1\\_INF2\\_PRTRs.doc](http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/WGprep.1/Documents/k10_2%29/English/WG_Prep_1_INF2_PRTRs.doc)

<sup>5</sup>For more information, see: <http://www.roadmaptozero.com/programme-documents.php>

local public. Participants agreed to explore an opportunity of inviting the representatives of the ZDHC group to a future meeting of the ICG and/or to delegate representatives from ICG to meetings of the ZDHC group. Participants also considered that such initiatives can be discussed at the future global round table. Further, the UNEP's Toolkit for the Minamata Convention can be developed in cooperation with ICG.

34. ECOSCOPE raised the issue of quality of data, which is a growing concern, in particular in countries with economies in transition, and suggested it as a possible topic for the next ICG meeting. In that context e.g. spectral analysis of waste (e.g. "ID-card for waste") can be discussed as a mean for improved quality control. In this respect, it was also suggested to discuss the methods for assessing the quality of data at the future global round table.

35. OECD stressed the importance of better harmonization of data between different inventory activities such as PRTRs and the other inventories under multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). This harmonization helps improve quality of data and reduce the cost to develop inventories. In this respect it was suggested to: (a) use the up-date of existing PRTR-systems for incorporating new aspects such as the registration of data on stocks of chemicals and hazardous waste, and (b) consider harmonization not only with other PRTRs but also, for example, with existing inventories and databases on health-related matters.

36. Participants also raised the issue of reliability of information with regard to the reasons for decreased pollution. The matter was recognized as a general problem for data analysis as information about changes in productivity is often missing. For example, decrease of some releases to water may be due to a new water treatment plant for the reporting facility, but may also be due to reduction of production. It was suggested, in this context, to use data on changes in hazardous waste volumes to make a qualitative estimate of changes in production. Another option to deal with this problem is to register changes in production not in absolute numbers but as a relative to the previous year's production of the reporting facility.

## **V. Relevant activities under SAICM**

37. UNEP informed about an upcoming stakeholder meeting related to SAICM, the Consultation Meeting for the draft Chemicals in Products (CiP) programme<sup>6,7,8</sup> (December 2013, Boston, USA), Following the Chemicals in Products mandate of the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM3,

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<sup>6</sup><http://www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/Portals/9/CiP/Consultation2013/Consultation%20meeting%202013%20Info%20Note.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>For information on the CiP project and CiP programme, please refer to the project web page at: <http://www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/UNEPsWork/ChemicalsinProductsproject/tabid/56141/Default.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> [http://prezi.com/9pwa5dxpwr6u/the-cip-programme-an-overview/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy](http://prezi.com/9pwa5dxpwr6u/the-cip-programme-an-overview/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)

September 2012, Nairobi, Kenya)<sup>9</sup>, UNEP has been facilitating the development of CiP programme, which will be proposed to ICCM4. An international team of experts has been involved in the drafting of the CiP programme, which builds upon the prior results of the CiP project (led by UNEP since 2009) and input from the community of stakeholders on this issue. . The overall aim of the CiP programme is facilitate information exchange for chemicals contained in products. Achieving this aim would help in dealing with issues related to chemicals contained in or released from products throughout their full life-cycle. These emissions take place while the product is in use and therefore is often in direct contact with humans. These releases can be classified e.g. under PRTR as diffuse emissions and are of particular importance with regards to impact on human health. The next major meeting of SAICM is the Open Ended Working Group, planned for late2014.

## **VI. Next meeting**

38. It was agreed that the next ICG meeting will take place back to back with the meeting of the Task Force on PRTRs under OECD tentatively scheduled for October 2014 in Chile.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.saicm.org/images/saicm\\_documents/iccm/ICCM3/Meeting documents/iccm324/K1283429e.doc](http://www.saicm.org/images/saicm_documents/iccm/ICCM3/Meeting_documents/iccm324/K1283429e.doc)