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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

Working Group of the Parties

Third meeting

Geneva, 20 and 21 November 2013

Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda

Promotion and capacity-building: subregional workshops

“Get Your Right to a Healthy Community” Subregional Workshop on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers in South-Eastern Europe (Sarajevo, 28–29 May 2013)

Report by the secretariat

Summary

Recognizing that the implementation of PRTRs would enhance public access to information on global environmental issues, facilitate public participation in environmental decision-making and contribute to the prevention and reduction of pollution of the environment, the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its first session (Geneva, 20-22 April 2010) called upon Signatories to accede to the Protocol at the earliest opportunity and to apply the provisions of the Protocol in the interim.¹ During the session, delegates from countries with economies in transition repeatedly expressed a strong interest in the Protocol and identified technical and human capacity needs (e.g., expertise and good practices) as the main challenges they faced in acceding to the Protocol. In response to this call, the Meeting of the Parties agreed that technical assistance activities should be undertaken, such as annual subregional workshops designed to respond to the needs of the countries concerned and to assist them in the effective application and implementation of the

¹ See ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/2/Add.1, Geneva Declaration.

Protocol.²

Pursuant to that mandate, the Protocol's Bureau and the Working Group of the Parties agreed to hold two subregional workshops. The first was organized for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Minsk, 3–4 November 2011). The second workshop, organized jointly with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, took place in Sarajevo on 28 and 29 May 2013, for the South-Eastern European subregion. The workshop was also attended by representatives of Israel. The objective of both workshops was to promote the implementation and ratification of the Protocol and specifically to provide practical assistance regarding the setting up of national pollutant release and transfer registers.

The present report summarizes the proceedings, identifies the key challenges, needs and solutions identified with regard to accession to and implementation of the Protocol by countries of the subregion, and outlines the major conclusions of the workshop.

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² See ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/2/Add.1, decision I/6 on Procedures for the Preparation, Adoption and Monitoring of Work Programmes and on the Work Programme for 2011–2014.

I. Introduction

1. The secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) 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) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) organized a subregional workshop, “Get Your Right to a Healthy Community”, to promote the implementation and ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs in South-Eastern Europe and Israel. The workshop was held on 28 and 29 May 2013 in Sarajevo and was hosted by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A. Attendance

2. The workshop was attended by delegations from the following Parties to the Protocol: Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Israel, Norway, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

3. The workshop was attended by delegations from the following Signatories to the Protocol: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

4. Also attending were representatives of the following international organizations: OSCE, represented by the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the OSCE Presence in Albania; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) (via Skype). The following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were represented: Centre for Environment (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Centre for Environmental Democracy-Florozone (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Environmental Movement of Vrbas (Serbia), European ECO Forum and the Kosovo Relief Committee (Kosovo).³

5. In addition, representatives of the following Aarhus Centres participated: Shkodra (Albania), Vlora (Albania), Association Aarhus Centre (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Niksic (Montenegro), Kragujevac (Serbia), South East Serbia (Serbia), Subotica (Serbia) and Novi Sad (Serbia). Two independent experts also participated and one acted as a facilitator.

6. Representatives of the following business companies were present: Alumina Doo factory (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Antea Cement sha (Albania).

B. Proceedings

7. The workshop was organized in the following seven thematic sessions: (a) Introduction to the development of national pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs); (b) current status of and challenges to PRTR development in South-Eastern Europe and Israel; (c) the institutional and regulatory framework for data collection and dissemination and for public participation and access to information and justice; (d) data

³ All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be read in line with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

management; (e) access to data and its dissemination; (f) building capacity, public awareness and international cooperation; (g) best practices in PRTR implementation — addressing problematic areas and creating pathways for progress.

8. Prior to the workshop a questionnaire was sent to participating countries from South-Eastern Europe and Israel to ascertain the status of PRTR development and to identify potential capacity needs. At the workshop, participants formed working groups which further identified problems, needs and solutions in relation to PRTR developments. Each session included expert presentations and a period of discussion in which participants provided interventions and posed questions to the expert panel.

9. Mr. Michel Amand (Belgium), Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs and Chair of the workshop, opened the event. Mr. Mirco Sarovic, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms Nina Suomalainen, Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms Esra Buttanri, Environmental Affairs Adviser at the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and an ECE Environmental Affairs Officer delivered welcoming addresses.

10. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties, PRTR experts from all participating countries and from industries in the region, representatives of international organizations with advanced expertise and that were active in the region provided PRTR presentations during the workshops' first six sessions. A presentation on behalf of the Spanish National Register for Pollutant Releases and Transfers (PRTR-España) was also delivered via Skype by the representative of UNITAR.

11. At the end of each day the workshop also included an exercise intended to summarize the conclusions of each day's discussions. Participants were split into three groups to prepare the conclusions of each day. A moderator for each group summarized and presented the outcomes of the relevant sessions. The secretariat and one facilitator supported the three groups in preparing their summaries. The seventh session consisted of a separate working group exercise to identify the principal capacity needs in South-Eastern Europe and Israel, and to suggest possible actions for matching these needs with available expertise.

12. The main outputs of the workshop included background materials, presentations and the present report. It is expected that the outcomes of the workshop will provide a basis to identify priority needs for future work and capacity-building activities in South-Eastern Europe and Israel. International organizations active in promoting PRTRs in South-Eastern Europe and Israel are strongly encouraged to review and utilize the outcomes from the Sarajevo workshop, along with the results of the survey (see para. 8) undertaken prior to the workshop (PRTR Protocol/SEE-2013/Inf.1) and relevant analysis (PRTR Protocol/SEE-2013/Inf.1), to inform their PRTR initiatives.⁴

II. Session one: introduction to the development of national pollutant release and transfer registers

13. The Chair provided an introductory presentation on the requirements for and the benefits of national PRTRs. This was followed by a presentation by a representative of the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, who provided a detailed analysis of the

⁴ Documents and other information for the workshop, including presentations and survey results and analysis, are available online from http://www.unece.org/prtr_SEE2013.

scope of the Protocol, focusing on activities, substances and types of releases covered and off-site transfers. Stakeholder involvement in developing a PRTR transparently, and in particular the potential role of Aarhus Centres in raising public awareness and steering consultation procedures, were covered by the representative of the Aarhus Information Centre in Shkodra (Albania). Finally, a representative of the Environmental Movement of Vrbas, Serbia, summarized the benefits of civil society engagement in monitoring environmental pollutants.

14. The following key issues were highlighted in relation to PRTR requirements and benefits:

(a) The Protocol set minimum requirements but Parties might include additional substances in national PRTRs, as they consider appropriate

(b) One of the main challenges ahead was to achieve convergence between pollutant (North American approach) and waste-specific (European Union (EU) approach) types of PRTRs.

(c) The Protocol allowed flexibility with respect to diffuse source reporting

(d) The development of PRTRs produced significant advantages in terms of:

(i) Promoting cost-effective integrated reporting systems;

(ii) Examining progress in reducing emissions;

(iii) Providing data for the assessment of environmental and health risks;

(iv) Reducing the bureaucratic burden of control regulations and achieving pollution prevention;

(v) Providing a tool for “greening the economy” by stimulating efforts for eco-innovation and efficient environmental management;

(vi) Providing a tool for environmental education;

(vii) Enabling the public to learn about releases and transfers affecting their communities

(e) Aarhus Centres could support the active engagement of all stakeholders in the development of PRTRs;

(f) Aarhus Centres could support both the dissemination of information and raise awareness of local communities on PRTRs;

(g) Aarhus Centres could facilitate public consultations between investors, communities and local and national authorities.

III. Session two: current status of and challenges to pollutant release and transfer register development in South-Eastern Europe and Israel

15. For session two, a tour de table was organized in which the relevant authorities from South-Eastern Europe and Israel shared their views on the current status of and challenges to PRTR development.

16. The following issues were addressed in the ensuing discussion:

(a) The representative of Albania described the existing legal framework in the country, while highlighting difficulties encountered in terms of the practical application of

the Protocol, namely, limited financial resources, limited capacity to collect data and difficulty in drafting legislation. Information was also provided with respect to various pilot exercises and the progress achieved in establishing a general emissions inventory. There was also a need to establish the legal framework in the light of the process of approximation to the EU legislation;

(b) The representative from Bosnia and Herzegovina provided an overview of the development of a national PRTR, with 24,000 industrial facilities currently reporting on 91 polluting substances. A rulebook covering 65 activities, nine sectors and 91 pollutants had been developed. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations had organized an official translation of the Protocol, which would be distributed to all the competent authorities and interested parties in order to start the ratification process;

(c) The representative from Croatia informed participants of the preparation of secondary legislation for its Environmental Pollution Register. The role of the various counties in collecting and disseminating PRTR information was explained, and the main features of the national portal, which was available in Croatian and English, were presented. Covering 126 pollutants, the Croatian European PRTR (E-PRTR) system had a more expansive list of activities than the Protocol;

(d) The representative from Israel informed participants about the steps taken by Israel in implementing a PRTR since its accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2009. First, a pilot voluntary system of reporting with 10 facilities had been set up. As a second step, the necessary legislation had been developed, in close collaboration with the national industry association and relevant NGOs. The legislation had been quickly approved by the parliament, which had facilitated the ratification process. Release-estimating techniques had also been developed. The biggest challenge had been to computerize the system. Some 550 reports had already been received and approximately 700 reports were expected in total. Furthermore, Israel had extended the list of sectors for which the industries would have to report on their emissions. The website was expected to be launched in December 2013, with information being available in Hebrew, Arabic and English. The aim was to develop a one-stop system similar to that in the Czech Republic. Workshops such as the present one were especially useful for those countries that were in the first years of development of their national PRTRs, as they could potentially provide answers to various difficulties encountered. Particular emphasis was given to the twinning project whereby one EU member State supported a non-member State. In the case of Israel, support was being provided by Germany. In response to a question from the floor, the representative of Israel clarified that NGOs and the industry association were both involved not only in formal meetings, but were able to participate fully in all the consultations on decisions before they were taken;

(e) The representative from Montenegro informed the meeting of the development of a rulebook, which stipulated the content of its national register and provided relevant information. Local registers of pollutants were maintained and, as of 2012, 19 out of 21 administrative units were responsible for using data to provide information. The project for an Environmental Information System had been developed through EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance funds. The Aarhus Centres had an important role to play in bringing PRTR information and the Protocol's provisions closer to the target groups: parliament; the Committee for Agriculture and Urban Planning; business and industry associations; chambers of commerce; and NGOs. Out of the three Aarhus Centres in Montenegro, two were hosted by the Montenegrin Environmental Protection Agency and the third one was an NGO-based Aarhus Centre;

(f) The representative from Serbia reported that the national register and rulebook had been harmonized with the respective EU legislation. Some 270 facilities reported their data periodically regardless of existing thresholds. Serbia had established a

new information system (NRIZ), which included data that went beyond the obligations laid out in the Protocol on PRTRs. In addition, Serbia had been sending data to the European PRTR register since 2009 on a voluntary basis;

(g) The representative from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia informed participants that the EU Directive on integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC Directive)⁵ had been fully transposed into national legislation and, as a first step, IPPC standards had been applied for 10 facilities. Moreover, 30 facilities had been granted ecological permits. Reporting would start in 2014. With the help of Germany and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) a rulebook on national methodology had been created. A pilot project had also been launched with the cement company TITAN, because cement companies were obliged to report to PRTRs. The national PRTR web portal was expected to go live by the end of June 2013;

17. The following issues were addressed in the ensuing discussion:

(a) An independent expert provided information on assistance to countries in South-Eastern Europe in setting up PRTR systems. That support had focused on practical problems faced by facilities and was funded by Finland via the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC);

(b) In response to a question on NGO involvement in the development of PRTRs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the representative of the relevant authority informed participants that there had been no NGO involvement as the Government's focus had been on developing laws and databases. However, the representative invited NGOs to be engaged in the further development of the PRTR system;

(c) With regard to data reporting, the Croatian representative explained that information could be collected on an extended list of substances, but when asked to report to the European Environment Agency, the relevant authorities only had to report on those covered by the Protocol under annexes I and II;

(d) The Chair commented that the Protocol was not preventing countries from extending their data beyond the list of substances covered by the Protocol. Also, some countries had started with less pollutants than those required by the Protocol. What was important was to deliver data, ensure access to reliable information and to take gradual steps towards full compliance with the Protocol's provisions;

(e) Furthermore, it was important to start the process of involving the public, through constructive dialogue on PRTR-related issues. While recalling that PRTRs could in fact facilitate and structure the dialogue between government authorities, NGOs and the public, the Chair stressed that even where there had been limited public consultation during the initial stages, lessons could be learned and the system of sharing information could be further improved;

(f) The representative of Norway proposed the development of simple systems, avoiding the coexistence of various questionnaires and different databases. For instance, in Norway, data under the IPPC Directive and PRTR data were merged to simplify the reporting process.

18. The following key problems and needs were identified in relation to the current status of PRTR development in South-Eastern Europe and Israel:

⁵ Directive 2008/1/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008 concerning integrated pollution prevention and control.

(a) Lack of sufficient human resources with the necessary expertise to allow full implementation of the Protocol;

(b) Lack of financial resources and infrastructure;

(c) Reporting systems in many countries had not been fully developed. Electronic reporting systems were in a pilot phase or were not fully operational in several countries (e.g., Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

19. The following solutions were proposed in relation to the current status of PRTR development in South-Eastern Europe and Israel:

(a) Authorities should explore possibilities and opportunities for cooperation with their counterparts in countries with advanced experience and expertise;

(b) Further capacity-building activities in the region were necessary, including training and workshops;

(c) Public participation should be ensured and an environmental information network should be established;

(d) The ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs should be promoted actively in all the concerned countries.

IV. Session three: the institutional and regulatory framework for data collection and dissemination and for public participation and access to information and justice

20. For session three, a representative of the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency described important steps and challenges in setting up an appropriate institutional structure for PRTRs; a representative of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia gave an analysis of the development of a legal framework for PRTRs; and a representative of the Antea Cement sha (Albania) shared the perspective and experience of operators in using PRTRs and highlighted relevant problems and challenges.

21. The following issues were addressed in the discussion:

(a) The representative from Serbia noted that the Environmental Protection Agency did not have a legal right to require the relevant facilities in the country to report. It was also noted that in the process of reporting three types of companies had been identified: companies that were not sufficiently informed; companies that did not know how to correctly provide the data; and companies that did not want to deliver the data. Also, if small companies with relatively low levels of waste were to report on their pollutant releases and transfers it would require additional human resources to process that information. However, the fact that there was no legal competence for supervision and control of companies by the Environmental Protection Agency remained the major source of difficulties in maintaining a national PRTR;

(b) The representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia mentioned that the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning and the national authorities should be obliged to respond to all questions addressed by the public;

(c) The representative of Antea Cement sha informed participants that, in addition to official permits, the company was expected to put in place a monitoring and calculation system that met TITAN group and stakeholder standards. The industry

representative expressed concern over the reliability of measurements and data carried out by the various facilities and reported by authorities. The lack of control mechanisms and strict criteria could lead high performers to appear like high polluters;

(d) The Chair commented that a PRTR did not address quality of data per se. Data validation was required, but a PRTR should be seen as a tool for information. PRTRs alone could not cover and support environmental performance monitoring.

22. The following key problems and needs were identified in relation to the institutional and regulatory framework for data collection and dissemination and for public participation and access to information and justice:

- (a) A lack of trained governmental officials;
- (b) A lack of awareness on PRTRs;
- (c) A lack of clarity in existing legislation on PRTRs;
- (d) A lack of clear and user-friendly guidelines for the use of the industry;
- (e) Limited human resources and uneven distribution of relevant expertise;
- (f) Legal issues in some countries in relation to data confidentiality, data dissemination or data acquisition;
- (g) Confusion caused by the existence of various parallel regulatory and reporting regimes;
- (h) A lack of competent and efficient inspection mechanisms that could monitor compliance with the provisions of the Protocol;
- (i) Administrative barriers within the competent authorities hindering the process of data collection and dissemination.

23. The following key solutions were proposed in relation to the institutional and regulatory framework for data collection and dissemination and for public participation and access to information and justice:

- (a) Increased clarity and simplification of legislation, so that government, industry, NGOs and the public could have the same understanding;
- (b) More workshops and training for representatives from both public authorities and industry;
- (c) A clear definition of the confidentiality criteria should be included in the legislation;
- (d) Elaboration of guidance material, outlining the key legal obligations in the local language for dissemination both to industry and public authorities;
- (e) Development of websites that would help the reporting procedure by the operators and the monitoring of the process by the public;
- (f) The strengthening of inspection mechanisms;
- (g) The simplification of burdensome administrative procedures.

V. Session four: Data management

24. Session four started with a presentation by a representative of the Swedish Environmental Research Institute, who analysed data collection methods, validation and quality assurance. That was followed by a presentation on the technical features of German

PRTR implementation provided by a representative of the German Federal Environment Agency. A representative of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia outlined the main features of the national PRTR database software and a representative of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment focused on electronic reporting and data handling. Finally, a representative of UNITAR made a presentation via Skype on behalf of PRTR-España.

25. The following questions were raised and comments were made during the discussion:

(a) In response to a query on confidentiality, the representative of UNITAR stressed that, in the case of Spain, comments on confidentiality had rarely been received. Instead, all information on the Protocol on PRTRs was public. It was also possible for the competent authorities, Aarhus Centres and PRTR experts to discuss solutions to any barriers to the implementation of the Protocol;

(b) The participants exchanged views and opinions on various methods and approaches to changing or correcting data. The representative of Norway demonstrated that data from previous years could be corrected provided sufficient justification was provided. The representative of Switzerland said that his country had introduced the possibility to correct data with the consent of the operator.

26. The following key problems were identified in relation to data management:

(a) A lack of knowledge or expertise in data validation and interpretation;

(b) A lack of necessary expertise to ascertain the most suitable methods of pollutant release calculation (measurement or estimation);

(c) A lack or an insufficient number of accredited laboratories;

(d) Long periods required to ensure data reliability and validation.

27. The following key needs were identified in relation to data management:

(a) Public dissemination of accurate data;

(b) Experts for data verification and measurement taking;

(c) Improved methods for pollutant release calculation;

(d) Comparability of data between the various PRTR facilities;

(e) Fundraising;

(f) Training and workshops, including those targeting NGOs, on PRTR-related issues;

(g) Guidance material on data management (including software).

28. The following key solutions were identified in relation to data management:

(a) Public dissemination of PRTRs through all available means, including web portals and the media;

(b) Using additional cost-effective forms of communication (e.g., tweeting);

(c) Establishing cooperation with academic institutions (universities or research institutes) that could provide low-cost expertise in data management (German approach);

(d) Establishing cooperation between information technology (IT) and PRTR experts;

- (e) Countries with advanced experience and expertise in PRTRs offering access to PRTR software to countries in South-Eastern Europe and Israel;
- (f) Further strengthening the involvement of decision makers;
- (g) Improving legislation;
- (h) Using the national system of environmental monitoring for PRTR needs;
- (i) Enabling comparison of data to provide for their validation;
- (j) Ensuring an easy data flow, involving all stakeholders, especially the relevant NGOs, as well as the Aarhus Centres.

VI. Session five: access to data and its dissemination

29. In session five, participants heard a presentation by a representative of the Climate and Pollution Agency of Norway on the design and structure of the Norwegian PRTR database and website, followed by a talk by an industry representative (Alumina doo Zvornik, Bosnia and Herzegovina) about industry's role in data dissemination. A representative of the Croatian Environment Agency demonstrated the functionalities of Croatia's Environmental Pollution Register and the Croatian national portal of the Emission Pollution Register (CNPEPR). A representative of the Agency of Environment and Forestry of Albania highlighted the role of the Consolidation of the Environmental Monitoring System in Albania (CEMSA) project in developing an Albanian PRTR system. Finally, a representative of the Centre for Environmental Democracy-Floozon, an NGO based in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, gave a presentation on the role of NGOs in promoting access to information and data dissemination.

30. The following issues were addressed during the discussion:

(a) With regard to the discussion on the best available methodologies, the Chair observed that a measurement was not necessarily better than a calculation. Instead, it was necessary to apply the most appropriate methodology. The Chair described the main features of the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED),⁶ which replaced the IPPC Directive, stressing that now the Protocol on PRTRs and EU legislation were now more linked than ever, as they would feed into each other.

(b) In response to a question as to what substances were covered in the PRTR in the Czech Republic, the Czech representative said that the Czech Integrated Pollution Register had a wider scope than the Protocol on PRTRs/E-PRTR, covering 93 substances;

(c) An independent expert highlighted the role of REC in matching capacity-building with technical assistance activities. In that respect REC had funded a mission for experts to travel from Germany to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Experts were available both online and on the phone. The software was first tested through a pilot project with the TITAN company. REC had also been helping the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia develop their portals.

31. The following key problems and needs were identified in relation to access to data and its dissemination:

(a) A lack of human and financial resources for development and support of PRTR websites;

⁶ Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control).

- (b) PRTR information did not reach stakeholders;
- (c) Stakeholders, including public officials, the media, business and NGOs, still had low levels of knowledge or expertise on PRTRs;
- (d) The main aim of countries' environmental monitoring systems was not always the same as that of the Protocol, and more integrated reporting systems might be required;
- (e) New reporting systems could create additional burdens in countries and might face resistance;
- (f) A lack of reporting or provision of inaccurate measurements or calculations of certain substances by some companies and some countries;
- (g) The potential of Aarhus Centres to facilitate dissemination of data had not been explored yet.

32. The following key solutions were identified in relation to access to data and its dissemination:

- (a) Simplification of the PRTR reporting form;
- (b) Building on the experience of other countries in the region (in terms of databases and web portals) to develop formulas for successful dissemination of data and information;
- (c) Using the most suitable open source software that offered inexpensive solutions to data dissemination;
- (d) Involving the mass media, NGOs, Aarhus Centres and new tools (Facebook, Twitter) as well as available electronic tools (databases such as the Aarhus Clearinghouse, PRTR.net);
- (e) Using existing e-learning and distance learning courses to train staff, industry, NGOs (e.g., in collaboration with UNITAR);
- (f) Encouraging experience exchange;
- (g) Sharing of PRTR software developed by countries with advanced expertise and adapting it to the needs of the countries in South-Eastern Europe;
- (h) Organizing international cooperation with countries in the region and with international organizations;
- (i) Creating a pool of experts on the Protocol on PRTRs that could support the implementation of the Protocol on the national and international levels;
- (j) Strengthening the role of NGOs, including as moderators between the public and authorities, through seminars, workshops and public campaigns.

VII. Session six: building capacity, public awareness and international cooperation

33. For session six, four presentations were given: an international expert outlined the key outcomes of REC activities on PRTRs in South-Eastern Europe; a representative of the OSCE Mission to Serbia discussed the role of Aarhus Centres as a platform for networking on PRTR development; a representative of the Centre for Environment (a Bosnian NGO based in Banja Luka) talked about a forward-looking role for Aarhus Centres, based on the

experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and a representative of UNITAR demonstrated via Skype connection various electronic tools on PRTRs that were currently available.

34. The following key issues were addressed in the ensuing discussion:

(a) Participants commented on a promotional brochure made by the OSCE Mission to Serbia. They agreed that it could be translated into English and concluded that Aarhus Centres could act as focal points and could amplify the voice of civil society organizations on matters related to PRTRs. It was also underlined that the development of a user-friendly, easy-to-follow PRTR Manual would be highly welcome;

(b) A representative from the NGO Kosovo Relief expressed concern over the lack of sufficient tools to fight environmental injustice. In response to his request for concrete examples illustrating the role of data as a tool for making policy decisions on public health and to improve quality of life, the Norwegian representative noted that the Norwegian Government was using PRTR data for policy decisions all the time. For instance, PRTR data had been used to establish a list of actions necessary to reduce gas emissions;

(c) Several participants commented that the development of PRTRs improved the decision-making process and saved costs as production became more efficient;

(d) The Chair explained that PRTRs provided a bottom-up approach to compare reports with other reports and find possible discrepancies. The European Commission used PRTR data to highlight the need for additional action, which had led to the proposal for the IED. The Protocol on PRTRs was not the ultimate tool, but it should be used in conjunction with other tools;

(e) A representative of European ECO Forum also commented that NGOs were using all available data for proposals on new EU policies. There was a lot of lobbying work that relied on data as a scientific basis for influencing policy at the national and EU level;

(f) An independent expert also explained that data extracted from the E-PRTR were used for implementing specific actions in the Danube River Basin, in the framework of the Danube Convention;

(g) The Chair also made reference to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, where PRTRs were used in monitoring, reporting and exchanging and disseminating information.

35. The following key problems were identified in relation to building capacity, public awareness and international cooperation:

(a) A lack of exchange of international best practices;

(b) A low level of NGO awareness and limited NGO participation in PRTR-related activities;

(c) A lack of expertise at Aarhus Centres to monitor and assess PRTR data;

(d) The fact that verification of data remained a challenge for most countries;

(e) A need for closer cooperation with countries in the region with advanced expertise in PRTRs to help countries seeking to develop PRTRs.

36. The following key solutions were identified in relation to building capacity, public awareness and international cooperation:

(a) Additional information and guidance with regard to online tools for PRTR capacity-building;

- (b) Using Aarhus Centres as multi-stakeholder platforms for the exchange of good practices, capacity-building and awareness-raising on PRTR issues. To that end, the Centres could set up action plans and terms of reference. The extended role of the Aarhus Centres was to create public awareness and interest, to introduce good governance principles and to build the capacity of citizens;
- (c) Dissemination of information via campaigns, mass media, etc.;
- (d) Specification by countries in South-Eastern Europe of their exact national needs with regard to PRTRs;
- (e) The organisation of training workshops, with UNITAR expertise, on the greater use of electronic tools for interactive PRTR learning, webinars, video conferencing and online PRTR workshops;
- (f) Increased capacity-building and stakeholder engagement via use of the PRTR as an indicator for measuring the success of a green economy in the respective countries and as a basis for developing green technologies and eco-innovation, for example, to address pollution hotspots;
- (g) Training for journalists and engagement of Aarhus Centres, NGOs and business on the subject of PRTRs and how PRTRs assist the development a green economy;
- (h) Twinning projects and expert missions to support the development of PRTRs in South-Eastern Europe and Israel.

VIII. Session seven: best practices in pollutant release and transfer register implementation — addressing problematic areas and creating pathways for progress

37. The seventh session offered the opportunity for a potential matching of PRTR needs in the region with available expertise. The session consisted of three themes: (a) setting up a PRTR; (b) calculation and measurement; and (c) PRTR databases, reporting and computerizing the system. Countries with available PRTR expertise decided which themes they wished to offer support on. They were then split in three theme groups and they provided expert guidance to representatives from the participating authorities. In order to facilitate the exercise, the secretariat prepared a background document on the status of PRTRs based on surveys circulated to participants from South-Eastern Europe and Israel prior to the meeting. The working group facilitator collected additional information provided by participants and produced a list of priority areas identified by the participants and possible opportunities for cooperation or partnership with countries with advanced experience and expertise.

38. The following issues were raised during the bilateral and group discussions:

- (a) In the case of Albania, the following needs were emphasized:
 - (i) Measuring equipment for monitoring;
 - (ii) Training on how to use the measuring equipment;
 - (iii) Monitoring of diffuse sources on the State level (all sectors), which should be included in the Environmental Pollution Register;
 - (iv) Support to the process of accreditation of laboratories for analysis of air emissions, water emissions, etc.;

- (b) Bosnia and Herzegovina listed the following priority areas:
 - (i) Software maintenance and support (register on pollutants and polluters, not only PRTRs) for which it approached Croatia for assistance;
 - (ii) Development of a geographic information system system for PRTRs;
 - (iii) Training to work with measuring equipment;
 - (iv) Training for using the software that it was hoped Croatia would provide;
 - (v) Guidelines for calculating, measuring and estimating annual emissions, for which both Croatia and Serbia were approached;
- (c) Croatia highlighted the following issues as most important:
 - (i) Monitoring of diffuse sources on the State level (all sectors), which should be included in the Environmental Pollution Register. For issues related to air emissions, Croatia requested assistance from Serbia;
 - (ii) A need to assess the compatibility and relevance of the data in PRTR systems with the relevant requirements of IED, for which they requested assistance from Germany;
 - (iii) Norway and the Netherlands (not present at the workshop) were requested to provide recommendations for better harmonization of data in the area of emissions to air, i.e., methodologies for measuring emissions in PRTRs versus methodologies for measuring greenhouse gas emissions;
- (d) Israel expected more assistance with respect to:
 - (i) Quality assurance methodologies;
 - (ii) PRTR-based environmental indicator development;
 - (iii) Emission and transfers inventory development;
- (e) Montenegro requested assistance on:
 - (i) Legislation analysis;
 - (ii) Recommendations for IT infrastructure development;
- (f) Serbia approached Germany and Norway to request assistance in establishing an integrated system for data collection that would allow for the provision of data by the industry only once;
- (g) The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia requested the continuation of technical assistance provided by Germany.

IX. Conclusions

39. The following conclusions complement the substantive outcomes outlined in the preceding sections:

- (a) Good representation and active participation was achieved as relevant authorities from South-Eastern Europe, NGOs, Aarhus Centres and industry representatives from the region attended and provided valuable inputs to the meeting;
- (b) Key problems, needs and solutions were identified and comprehensively detailed by workshop participants. These outcomes provide a basis for identifying priority needs for future PRTR development work, capacity-building activities and bilateral

programmes. The outcomes can be utilized by relevant authorities, civil society, Aarhus Centres, academia and business and industry in South-Eastern Europe and Israel and by international organizations, such as ECE, OSCE, UNITAR, the United Nations Environment Programme and OECD in order to inform ongoing and planned activities.

X. Closing statements

40. In a closing statement, the Chair thanked the workshop participants, summarized the capacity-building benefits of the subregional workshop and invited all participants to be guided by the motto that “the real power of influencing does not come from the information you own, but from the information you share”.
