



DET KONGELIGE
MILJØVERNDEPARTEMENT

Ministry of the Environment

To: National Focal Points for the Aarhus Convention
Participants in the Working Group on PRTRs

Your ref

Our ref

Date 12 January 2007

Dear Colleagues,

RE: ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE PROTOCOL ON PRTR

I hope that you have all benefited from some well-earned rest over the holiday season and are facing the New Year with renewed enthusiasm and energy.

As you know, it was agreed by the Working Group of the Parties at its sixth meeting to accept the kind offer of the Government of Latvia to host the third meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention. Following consultations with the host country, the meeting has provisionally been scheduled to take place in June 2008.

The Bureau met in September 2006 and will meet again later this month to discuss, among other things, the preparations for the third meeting of the Parties. One of the issues that the Bureau has discussed is the possibility that the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR) might take place back-to-back with the third meeting of the Parties to the Convention. You will recall that article 17, paragraph 1, of the Protocol requires that the ordinary sessions of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol be held "sequentially with or parallel to ordinary meetings of the Parties to the Convention, unless otherwise decided by the Parties to [the] Protocol".

On the basis of information provided by prospective Parties to the Protocol, it seems possible, perhaps even probable, that the Protocol will enter into force in time for the two meetings to be held sequentially or in parallel in Latvia. The Signatories to the Protocol have resolved to strive for the early entry into force of the Protocol (MP.PP/2003/1/Add.1/Rev.1). The internal work plan of the Working Group on PRTRs envisages the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol taking place in 2008 (ECE/MP.PP/AC.1/2006/2, para. 30). However, as the timing of the entry into force is dependent upon the independent actions of sovereign States (according to article 27 of the Protocol, it will enter into force 90 days after the deposit of the sixteenth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession), such an

outcome is by no means certain and it may require some political effort to achieve it.

The Protocol on PRTR was adopted in Kiev in May 2003 at the Fifth Ministerial Conference 'Environment for Europe'. The Sixth Ministerial Conference 'Environment for Europe' will take place in Belgrade in October 2007. Ministers are expected to use the occasion to review the implementation of their past decisions and actions.

Taking into account (i) the desirability of the Protocol entering into force as soon as possible, (ii) the benefits of holding the meetings of the governing bodies of the Convention and Protocol back-to-back and the indication in the Protocol that this should be the norm, and (iii) the relevance of the Belgrade Conference, the Bureau has agreed to propose that the Conference should serve as some kind of a target to stimulate progress towards ratification. Specifically, it has agreed to invite Parties to the Convention, Signatories to the Protocol and other prospective Parties to the Protocol to make efforts to ratify the Protocol as soon as possible with a view to achieving the entry into force by the time of the Belgrade Conference (meaning that a sufficient number of instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession would need to be deposited by early June 2007). Failing that, if a sufficient number of instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession were deposited before the Belgrade Conference, this would at least bring about the entry into force within the following three months and make it possible to announce the date of the entry into force in Belgrade.

On behalf of the Bureau, I therefore encourage you to explore the possibilities for expediting progress towards ratification of the Protocol by your country with a view to achieving the above target.

The fourth meeting of the Working Group on PRTR and the seventh meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, which will take place in Geneva on 14-16 February 2007 and 2-4 May 2007 respectively, will provide opportunities to assess progress towards this goal.

All the best for 2007!

Yours faithfully,



Hanne Inger Bjurström

Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention