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*Geneva,*

The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the UNECE Aarhus Convention, signed by thirty-six governments and the European Community in May 2003 in Kiev, Ukraine, is set to enter into force on 8 October 2009 following France's ratification, which was deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General on 10 July.

Pollutant release and transfer registers are inventories of pollutants from industrial sites, but also smaller, widespread sources such as traffic, agriculture and small and medium-sized enterprises. Under the Protocol, facilities will be required to report annually on the amounts of certain pollutants they release to the environment or transfer to other facilities. The information will then be placed on a public register accessible through the Internet.

The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers will help identify the biggest polluters in communities across Europe. The Protocol also covers facilities releasing large quantities of greenhouse gases known to contribute to global warming and thus offers a new tool to countries battling climate change.

In the past, public disclosure of information about pollutant releases has led companies to improve their environmental performance. Citizens in countries requiring industries to report on their releases and transfers of significant pollutants will therefore wield a powerful tool in the fight for a cleaner and safer environment.

Jan Kubiš, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, described this new international law as "a milestone in the advancement of public access to information about sources of environmental pollution in the UNECE region".

Several parties to the Protocol have released their Registers on the Internet over the past months: Switzerland in February, Spain in March, the United Kingdom in April and Germany in June 2009.

The European Union's 27 Member States are expected to release their first annual reports on the release and transfer of the Protocol's list of pollutants on 30 September 2009.

The full text of the Protocol is available in the three official languages of the UNECE (English, French and Russian) at: http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/docs/prtrtext.htm.

This page also contains unofficial translations in Spanish, Dutch, Georgian and Macedonian.

For further information, please visit www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.htm or contact:

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The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) seeks to promote greater transparency and accountability among government bodies by guaranteeing public rights of access to environmental information, providing for public involvement in environmental decision-making and requiring the establishment of procedures enabling the public to challenge environmental decisions. The Aarhus Convention was adopted in the Danish city of Aarhus in June 1998 and entered into force in October 2001. The Convention has 42 Parties.

The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers was adopted at an extra-ordinary meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention on 21 May 2003, where it was signed by the following countries: Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom, and by the European Community.

To date, the Protocol has been ratified by seventeen countries: Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden and Switzerland. The European Community is also a Party to the Protocol. The Protocol will enter into force on 8 October 2009, ninety days after the deposit of the 17th State's instrument of ratification.

**Map of Parties and Signatories to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers** – http://www.unece.org/env/pp/PRTRmapf.html

**Map of countries which have Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers** -- http://www.prtr.net/links_e.cfm#

Ref: ECE/ENV/09/P17