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A Global Round Table on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, chaired by Belgium and Japan, will be held on 19 November 2013 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The event is co-organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) with a view to promoting the transfer of knowledge and fostering environmental democracy around the globe. It demonstrates remarkable synergies between the three organizations, which have matched capacities and expertise for the first time to co-organize a joint meeting.

Governments, non-governmental organizations and representatives from industry, intergovernmental organizations and academic institutions from different continents will come to Geneva to discuss pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs) — one of the key tools for ensuring environmental transparency. The event is expected to take stock of successes and challenges in implementing PRTR systems to date in order to create a snapshot that can guide future activities towards implementation of new PRTRs, and the enhancement of existing ones.

PRTRs allow access to specific environmental information for everybody, with virtually no restrictions. Free web-based access to geo-referenced environmental data empowers the public, decision makers in government and industry, scientists and journalists to make informed choices. Furthermore, a well-established network of environmental data gathered and stored by PRTRs allows industries to validate their efforts in reaching sustainability.

While there are other initiatives promoting PRTRs, the UNECE Protocol on PRTRs is the only legally binding instrument on these registers to ensure minimum standards for equal rights and transparency in the use of environmental data. It offers a solid legal framework for enhancing public access to information and moving towards sustainable and environmentally sound development for present and future generations.

Note for Editors:

The Protocol on PRTRs to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, adopted in 2003 in Kyiv and in force since 2009, requires companies to provide information on pollution from industrial sites and other sources — such as greenhouse gases and heavy metals — to a national register that is publicly accessible and searchable through the Internet.

For more information, please visit: http://www.unece.org/prtr_grt2013.html, http://www.unece.org/env/pp/welcome.html and http://prtr.net/