

DRAFT MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

Draft declaration prepared by the Bureau

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of Parties, Signatories and other States, parliamentarians, business and industry organizations, and representatives of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations promoting environmental protection and sustainable development, throughout the ECE region and beyond, gathered at the first meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, on [...] in [...] affirm the following:

I. PROMOTING IMPLEMENTATION AND ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND DEVELOPMENT

1. The entry into force of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers marks a milestone in the advancement of public access to information about sources of environmental pollution in the UNECE region. Its effective implementation is expected to facilitate public participation in environmental decision-making and to contribute to the prevention and reduction of pollution of the environment, thereby promoting sustainable and environmentally sound development and corporate accountability;
2. We commit ourselves to taking the necessary measures, within our respective capacities and sphere of competence, to achieve and maintain full and effective implementation of the Protocol;
3. We call upon Signatories and other interested States, to ratify or accede to the Protocol at the earliest opportunity, and to apply the provisions of the Protocol in the interim;
4. We invite all Member States of the United Nations and regional economic integration organizations which are not yet party to the Protocol to consider acceding to the Protocol. In the meantime we encourage them to participate actively in the work under the Protocol so that the standards contained in the Protocol are recognized and applied by as many States as possible and widely reflected in effective rules and regulations at national level;
5. We recognize that adequate funding is necessary for implementation of the Protocol. We therefore welcome the establishment of the voluntary scheme of financial arrangements based on shares as a first step to meet this need and urge Parties and others in a position to do so to contribute financially to the Protocol in accordance with the scheme, as soon as possible. We believe that in the long run the financial base for the Protocol should be broadened and that stable and predictable funding for the activities under the Protocol should be secured;

6. We urge Governments to support and promote the efforts of facilities to monitor, calculate or estimate emissions and transfers of pollutant releases, through the preparation of guidance materials, information campaigns and training exercises;

7. We are committed to strengthening international cooperation with a view to establishing and/or maintaining national pollutant release and transfer registers in all States that are Parties or Signatories to the Protocol, recognizing the urgency and importance of issues addressed by article 16 of the Protocol and the needs especially of developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

II. CAPACITY-BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

8. We encourage business and industry to assist facility owners and operators in the use of pollutant release and transfer registers as tools for encouraging improvements in environmental performance and demonstrating progress in pollution reductions, as well as to assist with reporting within their respective sectors. The UNECE Guidelines on Strengthening Environmental Monitoring and Reporting by Enterprises¹ provides useful guidance in this regard;

9. We welcome the significant contribution of civil society organizations and regional environmental centres to raising awareness of pollutant release and transfer registers and building capacity for implementation at national level. Such efforts further implementation of the Protocol and merit the support of donor institutions;

10. We note with appreciation the Global Environment Facility Pollutant Release and Transfers Registers Project, being implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), which seeks to assist six countries with their development of national pollutant release and transfer registers in support of implementation of the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, as a concrete example of international cooperation and synergy between the Protocol and this Convention;

11. We welcome the adoption of the European Community Regulation 166/2006 concerning the establishment of a European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register as a major step toward achieving the objective of the Protocol in the countries concerned;

12. We welcome also the publication of the UNECE Guidance on Implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers² and invite countries to translate this guidance into their national languages;

¹ United Nations, 2007. New York and Geneva (ECE/CEP/141).

² UNECE Guidance on Implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, 2008. New York and Geneva (ECE/MP.PP/7).

III. SYNERGIES WITH RELEVANT MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

13. We recognize also that the commitments undertaken at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development to achieve sound management of chemicals by the year 2020 are supported through implementation of the Protocol. We welcome the adoption by the International Conference on Chemicals Management³ of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and its Global Plan of Action, which recognize the role of pollutant release and transfer registers in support of SAICM, and note with appreciation the activities of the SAICM Quick Start Programme in support of the design of national pollutant release and transfer systems in countries which may significantly contribute to implementation of the Protocol;

14. We further recognize that national pollutant release and transfer registers, when appropriately designed, can assist countries with meeting their obligations under other multilateral environmental agreements and international initiatives concerning pollutants and waste while furthering their implementation. We call for cooperation with such international agreements and initiatives, including the 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes, the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and the UNEP global initiative on mercury and urge Parties to explore possible synergies between these instruments and the Protocol;

15. Recalling the right of a Party to maintain or introduce a more extensive pollutant release and transfer register, as provided through article 3, paragraph 2, of the Protocol, and taking into account the decision to extend the list of pollutants covered by the UNEP Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, we recommend that countries which have not already designed their national systems consider inclusion in their national systems of the full list of pollutants contained in the annexes to the Stockholm Convention;

16. We invite the Parties to the UNFCCC to explore the possible contribution of greenhouse gas emission data collected in accordance with the Protocol to the reporting of national inventories of greenhouse gas emissions under the UNFCCC;

17. We recognize the work of the International Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers Coordinating Group, in particular its efforts to coordinate capacity-building activities of the United Nations and regional organizations in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as a contribution to the implementation of the Protocol;

IV. COOPERATION TO IMPLEMENT PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

18. We pledge to keep the implementation and development of this Protocol under continuous review in order to ensure its appropriateness and relevance to meeting the

³ At its first meeting, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates from 4 to 6 February 2006.

objectives of the Protocol. We seek to ensure that the periodic evaluation of further pollutants or activities for inclusion in the Protocol is undertaken, while avoiding duplication of work with relevant processes;

19. We support the scoping study of the pollutant-specific and waste-specific approaches undertaken by the OECD Task Force on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers in partnership with the Parties to the Protocol; we believe that an exchange of information on the experience gained in reporting transfers using the pollutant-specific and waste-specific approaches would facilitate review of that experience by the second session of the Meeting of the Parties;

20. We recommend that Governments use geographical information systems and online mapping of pollutant releases and transfers to assist the public with accessing and visualizing pollutant release and transfer register data;

21. We welcome the further development of PRTR.net, the global portal on pollutant release and transfer registers, launched in 2007 under the auspices of the OECD Task Force on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, and invite donors to provide support for this important information resource;

22. We pledge to keep under review technical assistance needs, so that the Working Group may consider whether a separate technical assistance mechanism is needed to assist Parties, especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

23. Noting that the Protocol builds upon the basic obligations⁴ set out in the Aarhus Convention to progressively establish a nationwide system of pollution inventories or registers, we consider that synergies between these instruments should be maintained and promoted, inter alia, through joint awareness-raising activities and exchange of information on implementation between their respective Parties;

V. CONCLUSION

24. We express gratitude to the Governments of Czech Republic and Belgium for leading the Working Group of the Protocol during the preparatory period leading up to the first meeting of the Parties;

25. We welcome and accept the offer of the Government of [...] to host the second session of the Meeting of the Parties in [...] of [...].

⁴ Contained in article 5, paragraph 9, of the Convention.