

PRTRs: MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Global round table

19 November 2013

Geneva, Palais des Nations

Welcome address by Ambassador R. Winzap (Switzerland)

Dear Chairs, dear delegates

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you on behalf of the Swiss Government to this Global round table on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers in Switzerland. We are very pleased to host this important meeting here in Geneva. This city is an international environmental competence centre. Moreover many international organizations and platforms located in Geneva use synergies to further advance their work on Green Economy – UNEP's Economics and Trade Branch, the Green Growth Knowledge Platform, the WTO, UNCTAD and World Business Council for Sustainable Development to name just a few. By further strengthening this cluster Switzerland plays an important role in the transition to a global Green Economy.

Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers are based on five pillars. The first one are the national emission inventories that have been established in several pioneer countries since the 1980s. The second pillar is the principle 10 of the Rio declaration from 1992, where the right to have access to information concerning the environment has been decided. The third pillar is the Recommendation of the OECD council from 1996 on Implementing Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers in all OECD countries. The fourth element is the UNECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers from 2003 that entered into force in 2009 after ratification by 32 parties. And the fifth pillar are the numerous projects of UNITAR, UNEP and individual countries aiming at the implementation of PRTRs in countries in other regions.

It is good to know that today national pollutant registers are in place or in preparation in many countries. It is the achievement of you and your colleagues to have implemented the various ideas and concepts on a national legal base and to have made databases and web sites operational where data on emissions of pollutants can easi-

ly be found.

The companies are now well aware of this new transparency. They know that their emission data are publicly available. This fact influences their decisions about environmental issues and motivates them to reduce emissions. - The public can read and compare the data, and use this knowledge to contribute in various ways to decisions in environmental matters.

However, it still remains a big challenge to ensure that a PRTR is sufficiently known to the public as an important and reliable source of environmental data and that these data are also used. To take full advantage of this powerful instrument, it is necessary to maintain the dialogue between all stakeholders and to regularly take actions for awareness rising in the public. The ultimate goal is not to have as many data as possible, but to reduce pollution of the environment.

The ingredients for a successful PRTR are sound data, adequate access tools and a spirit of transparency and communication. The fact that we are here today on the invitation of three international organizations, UNECE, OECD and UNITAR, makes me feel very optimistic that this spirit of transparency and communication together with a will for cooperation is present throughout the PRTR community. Let's benefit of this as much as we can by sharing knowledge and experience.

We would like to further this exchange of ideas also after this day. It is my pleasure to announce that you are offered a first opportunity for informal talks and building personal relationships. We would like to invite you to a reception today at 18.30 in the delegates Lounge on the 8th floor.

I encourage you to profit from this opportunity.

I wish you a successful day with inspiring presentations and challenging discussions!