Economic Commission for Europe
Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

Bureau
Tenth meeting
Geneva, 7 July 2016

Report of the tenth meeting of the Bureau

I. Attendance

Bureau members: Ms. Tina Skårman (Sweden, Chair), Ms. Ulrike Schüler (Germany, Vice-Chair), Mr. Øyvind Hetland (Norway, Vice-Chair), Mr. Chris Allen (European Union), Mr. Nebojša Redzic (Serbia) and Mr. Roland Ritter (Switzerland).

Observers: Mr. Iñigo de Vicente-Mingarro for Ms. Carmen Canales (Spain) and Ms. Mara Silina (European ECO-Forum).

Not present: Ms. Carmen Canales (Spain).

II. Opening and adoption of the agenda

1. The Chair opened the meeting and suggested to consider the issue of assessment of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.1) under the item on implementation of the work programme (see section 5 below). The Bureau agreed on the proposal and adopted the provisional agenda.

III. Status of ratification of the Protocol

2. The Bureau took note of the report by the secretariat, which confirmed that since the fourth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Madrid, 26 November 2015), Malta and Ukraine had ratified the Protocol on 20 May 2016 and 2 May 2016 respectively.

IV. Designation of national focal points

3. The Bureau took note of the report by the secretariat. It noted with concern that Slovenia still had not nominated a focal point for the Protocol. In this context, the Bureau raised the issue of Slovenia’s failure to submit its national implementation report for the previous reporting cycle and possible challenges for preparing the report for the 2017 reporting cycle.

4. The Bureau requested the secretariat to convey these concerns to Slovenia and also agreed to bring the matter to the discussion at the upcoming fifth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Geneva, 23–24 November 2016), as necessary.

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1 This document was not formally edited.
V. Implementation of the work programme for 2015-2017

5. The Bureau took note of the reports by the secretariat on the implementation of the Protocol’s work programme for 2015-2017 and on financial matters. The Bureau also discussed what would be the most effective way to assess the progress in implementing the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020. The Bureau agreed that a short overview of the progress should be based on the Framework for implementation (section V. of the Strategic Plan for 2015-2020) and that national implementation reports for the 2017 reporting cycle along with other existing material (e.g. a document on systemic issues) will be the most suitable sources for information. In addition, a targeted survey by the secretariat could further address any possible information gaps. In this regard, the Bureau decided to request the Compliance Committee to prepare a synthesis report on the 2017 reporting cycle and the overview of progress in implementing the Strategic Plan, either as an Annex to the synthesis report or as a stand alone document.

VI. Preparations for the fifth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties

(a) Provisional agenda of the fifth meeting of the Working Group

6. The Bureau considered and approved the provisional agenda for the fifth meeting of the Working Group (Geneva, 23–24 November 2016). It requested the secretariat to finalise the document and submit it to the Working Group.

(b) Compliance and reporting mechanisms

7. The Bureau considered the following two documents that were revised in the light of the comments received from Parties and stakeholders after the fourth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Madrid, 26 November 2015):

(i) Draft systemic issues concerning the implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and recommendations on how to address them.

8. The Bureau focused its discussion on the two following issues that were identified as rather challenging: (a) integration of diffuse sources into PRTRs established under the Protocol and (b) how contaminated sites, including obsolete storages, should be addressed in the context of the Protocol (e.g. whether they may qualify as diffuse sources, releases to land or other).

9. In the light of the discussion, the Bureau suggested that a dedicated workshop on the above issues could be organised in the margins or back to back with the future meetings of the Working Group of the Parties.

10. The Bureau also considered whether or not to include an additional selected list of recommendations in an annex of the document. In this context, the Bureau noted the following: (a) the recommendations were not based on national implementation reports; (b) there were other ways of implementing recommendations; and (c) the suggested recommendations are based on the specific experience of EU countries only and not necessarily relevant for other countries. The Bureau, therefore, concluded that such list would be misleading for a reader and should not be a part of the document. At the same time, the Bureau requested the secretariat to explore an opportunity to make it available through PRTR.net.

11. The Bureau approved the document as amended at the meeting and requested the secretariat to finalise it in consultation with the Chair of the Compliance Committee, as needed, and submit it to the Working Group at its next meeting.

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2 It was recalled that the issue was e.g. addressed in the Guidance on the Implementation of the Protocol on PRTRs ECE/MP.PP/7 (item IV. PRTR Data, B. Diffuse sources), available from http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=28225#/.
12. In addition, the Bureau agreed with the suggestion by the Chair to upload to PRTR.net information on the “Solutions-project”, including e.g. a table on substances and their linkages to other multilateral agreements.

(ii) Draft guidance for reporting on implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

13. The Bureau approved the document with the agreed amendments and requested the secretariat to finalise it in consultation with the Chair of the Compliance Committee, as needed, and submit it to the Working Group at its next meeting.

14. In response to the request of the Bureau made at its ninth meeting (Madrid, 27 November 2015), the secretariat reported that so-called “checklists” on specific steps or practical measures required for the ratification of the Protocol were available in the Guidance on the Implementation of the Protocol on PRTRs (ECE/MP.PP/7), in particular in several boxes in the section II on Institutional and Legal Implementation, including Public Participation and Access to Information and Justice (e.g. boxes 5 to 8, 11 and 14).

(c) Future work programme

15. The Bureau considered and approved Draft decision on the work programme for 2018-2021 and requested the secretariat to finalise it and submit it to the Working Group at its next meeting.

(d) Financial arrangements

16. The Bureau considered the Draft decision on financial arrangements and approved it with the agreed amendments. The Bureau requested the secretariat to finalise it and submit it to the Working Group at its next meeting.

(e) Global promotion of the Protocol and capacity building

17. The Bureau took note of the reports by the secretariat and members of the Bureau on the Second Global Round Table on PRTRs (Madrid, 24–25 November 2015), and on the promotion of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, June 2016). The Bureau requested the secretariat to finalise the report on the Second Global Round Table on PRTRs in consultation with the Chairs, as needed, and submit it to the Working Group at its next meeting. The Bureau also considered the draft programme for the second subregional workshop for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Minsk, 19–21 September 2016).

(f) Technical assistance and resources

18. The Bureau considered the draft note on technical assistance and resources and agreed to provide any possible comments on the text within one week. The Bureau requested the secretariat to finalize the note in the light of the comments received and submit it to the Working Group at its next meeting.

VII. Preparations for the third session of the Meeting of the Parties

19. The Bureau considered the draft outline of the agenda of the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol and approved the document as revised at the meeting. The Bureau also reconfirmed its support to a joint high-level segment with the Convention’s Meeting of the Parties, which will be dedicated to the role of the Convention and the Protocol in implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Bureau agreed that a background note on this subject should be prepared by the secretariat to facilitate the discussions at the high-level segment.

20. In addition, the Bureau confirmed that the third session should be held in the week of 11 September 2017 and it welcomed the offer of Montenegro to host the events.

21. The Bureau requested the secretariat to finalise the draft outline of the agenda of the third session and submit it to the Working Group at its next meeting.

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3 See www.solutions-project.eu.
22. The Bureau also took note of a general preparatory timeline for the third session\(^5\) and of the following tentative schedule for preparing a draft Declaration for the high-level segment:

- Chairs of the Convention’s and Protocol’s MOPs will prepare the first draft outline of the Declaration and, with the assistance of the secretariat, send it to the two Bureaux for email consultation to be completed by mid-October 2016;
- The draft outline of the Declaration, revised by the Chairs, will be distributed to the Convention’s and Protocol’s Parties and stakeholders for comments with the deadline to respond by mid-November 2016, and submitted to the Protocol’s Working Group of the Parties for its consideration (23-24 November 2016);
- Protocol’s Bureau will meet back to back with the Protocol’s Working Group of the Parties in November 2016 to revise the draft Declaration for sending it to the Convention’s Bureau for consideration;
- Convention’s Bureau will revise the draft Declaration for its submission to the 21st meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (date tbc) and for comments by Parties and stakeholders;
- Chairs of the Convention’s and the Protocol’s MOPs will liaise, with the assistance of the secretariat, on the finalization of the draft Declaration for its submission to the high-level segment of the two MOPs.

VIII. **Calendar of meetings**

23. The Bureau took note of the following upcoming meetings:

- 19–21 September 2016, Minsk – second subregional workshop for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;
- 5 October 2016, Paris – tenth meeting of the International PRTR Coordinating Group, to be held back to back with the OECD Working Group on PRTRs;
- 23–24 November 2016, Geneva – fifth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs;
- 24 November 2016 – eleventh meeting of the Bureau of the Protocol on PRTRs.

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