

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

Eight meeting

Geneva, 19 May 2015

Report of the eight meeting of the Bureau¹

1. Attendance

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

Observers: Mr. Andreas Grangler for Ms. Manuela Musella (European Union), Mr. Iñigo de Vicente-Mingarro for Ms. Carmen Canales (Spain) and Ms. Mara Silina (European ECO-Forum).

Not present: Ms. Carmen Canales (Spain) and Ms. Manuela Musella (European Union).

2. Opening and adoption of the agenda

The Bureau adopted the provisional agenda as amended at the meeting.

3. Status of ratification of the Protocol

The Bureau took note of the report by the secretariat, which confirmed that there were no new Parties joining the Protocol since the Bureau's latest meeting.

4. Designation of national focal points

The Bureau took note of the report by the secretariat and agreed to address the issue of missing nominations from Hungary and Slovenia at the upcoming forth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (26 - 27 (am) November 2015). The Bureau also noted that the European Commission is considering a replacement of Ms. Manuela Musella.

¹ This document was not formally edited.

5. Implementation of the work programmes for 2012-2014 and 2015-2017, including financial matters and the proposal by senior management of ECE secretariat on the future funding of the ECE MEAs

The Bureau took note of the brief by the Chair on her participation in the two latest informal meetings of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) held on 27 October 2014 and 13 April 2015 in Geneva.¹ In the light of the preparations for the upcoming 8th Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 6-8 June 2016), the Bureau agreed that it will be important for Parties to promote the Protocol at this event through cooperating closely with the EfE focal points as to: (a) provide inputs to the documents prepared for the Conference and (b) contribute to formal statements to be delivered at the Conference. The secretariat will also explore opportunity for cooperating with partner organisations as to promote the Protocol and the Aarhus Convention at possible side events.

The Bureau also took note of the proposal by senior management of the ECE secretariat on the future funding of the ECE MEAs.² In this context, it was noted that Parties to the Protocol already implemented a number of measures outlined in the proposal, including defining core and non-core tasks in the Protocol's work programme and considering different options for financial arrangements.³ The Bureau saw the proposal as a flexible guidance for Parties' information.

The Bureau took note of the reports by the secretariat on the implementation of the Protocol's work programme and on financial matters. The Bureau expressed its concerns regarding information on discontinuation of support to the Protocol's secretariat of one staff member in the General Service category covered by the 13 per cent programme support costs levied from the trust funds of the ECE Environment Division. In this regard, the Bureau requested the secretariat to provide it with a formal written explanation regarding this decision, addressing the related reasons and the future use of the concerned funds.

6. Documents prepared by the Compliance Committee

The Bureau provided comments on the following two documents prepared by the Compliance Committee: Guidance on reporting on the Protocol's implementation (PRTR/Bureau/2015/Inf.5) and Systemic issues arising under the Protocol on PRTRs and recommendations on how to address them (PRTR/Bureau/2015/Inf.6). In particular, the discussion was focused on the following key aspects: (a) good practice regarding implementation of the Protocol's provisions on confidentiality; (b) a possible non-compliance with the Protocol by EU Member States, which did not set up fully functional national PRTRs; (c) challenges linked to the inclusion of emissions from diffuse sources in PRTRs; and (d) issues related to storage of hazardous substances in e.g. obsolete facilities. With regard to the latter, it was agreed that the European ECO-Forum will conduct a survey on this subject and will present its results at the next meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

¹ See <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/informal-networks.html>.

² Available from <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/informal-networks.html>.

³ See Draft decision II/4 on financial arrangements ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/L.5 available from http://www.unece.org/prtrmopp2_docs.html#.

It was agreed that members of the Bureau would send their possible additional comments on the above two documents to the secretariat by 15 June 2015. The Bureau requested the secretariat, once finalized, to process the two above papers as official documents and submit them in the three ECE official languages to the upcoming meeting of the Working Group of the Parties for its consideration.

7. Preparations for the Global Round Table on PRTRs

The Bureau approved the provisional programme for the second Global Round Table scheduled to take place on 24 (pm) - 25 November 2015 and requested the secretariat to liaise with OECD as to finalize it for distribution to Parties and stakeholders.

The Bureau discussed possible speakers for different agenda items of the Global Round Table and agreed to continue deliberations via email. It also requested the secretariat to invite the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes¹ to the meeting as a speaker.

The Bureau took note of the presentation by Spain on preparations for the Global Round Table and expressed its appreciation for the kind offer of Spain to host it along with the meetings of the Working Group of the Parties and the Bureau.

8. Promotion and capacity building

The Bureau considered opportunities for organising different capacity building workshops and requested the secretariat to liaise with partner organisations and potential host countries as to organize a subregional workshop for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The Bureau also discussed the promotion of the Protocol in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.2)² and requested the secretariat to conduct a survey among these countries on the implementation of this initiative as to inform the next meeting of the Working Group of the Parties of the developments.

The Bureau took note of the information provided by the Chair on her and the secretariat's informal discussions with the Chair of the Executive Body and the secretariat of the UNECE Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution on a possible joint workshop between the two MEAs.

9. Agenda for the fourth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties

The Bureau considered and approved the agenda for the fourth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties. It also requested the secretariat to finalise it in consultation with the Chair for its submission to the Working Group.

¹For more information on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur see <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Environment/ToxicWastes/Pages/SRToxicWastesIndex.aspx>.

² Available from http://www.unece.org/prtrmopp2_docs.html#/.

10. Calendar of the future meetings

The Bureau took note of the tentative calendar of meetings prepared by the secretariat.
