



PRTR Protocol
1st Meeting of the Working Group of the Parties
(Geneva, 28-29 November 2011)

Opening Statement
by
Mr. Andrzej Jagusiewicz
Chief Inspector of Environmental Protection
of the Republic of Poland

on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

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Mister Chairman, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

First of all we would like to thank our host, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for organizing the 1st Meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the PRTR Protocol.

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 came into force on 8 October 2009. Since that time, over 2 years have passed and what needs to be stressed is the great progress that has been made. During that time a number of actions have been undertaken, which have made a significant contribution to capacity-building, awareness raising and implementation of the Protocol. Moreover the Protocol has been ratified by most UNECE member countries.

It is a great pleasure to attend the first meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the PRTR Protocol. The European Union and its Member States are convinced that the establishment of such important subsidiary body is a significant step in implementing and promoting the Protocol's provisions and activities. As we know from our experiences in the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, this body has excellent potential to help to address current and emerging challenges.

We are also aware that Parties and Signatories to the Protocol all have to take responsibility for accomplishing the tasks of the Working Group, in particular overseeing the implementation of the work programme of the Protocol, exchanging information on technical issues, and dealing with practical implementation of the Protocol and sharing examples of good practice on public participation in the development of PRTRs. We are convinced that only our joint commitment will bear success. We hope that the results of our deliberations during this session will continue to play a crucial part in the PRTR process as a whole.

The implementation of the work programme for 2010-2011 and financial support to implement it are of great importance to the PRTR Protocol. Moreover, the possible necessity of creating separate technical assistance mechanism needs our special attention and balanced debate as well. We are aware of the fact that implementation can be very challenging, as evidence from the Aarhus Convention suggests.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, in conclusion, the European Union and its Member States attach significant importance to the Aarhus Convention and the PRTR Protocol and we see this first meeting of the WGP as an opportunity to enhance our cooperation as well as our efforts.

We hope that today's session will be very successful and bear substantial results

Thank you for your attention.