



International PRTR Coordinating Group

Tenth meeting

Wednesday, 5 October 2016, Paris, France

REPORT¹

1. The meeting of the International PRTR Coordinating Group (ICG) was attended by representatives of the following countries and organizations: Chile, Czechia, European Union, Germany, Japan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the European ECO Forum, NGO network. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Iñigo de Vicente-Mingarro (Spain), and serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

I. Opening and adoption of the agenda

2. The Chair opened the meeting with an introduction to the work of ICG and presented the provisional agenda.² The agenda was then adopted by the participants as it was presented by the Chair.

II. PRTR activities

3. The Chair presented the current version of the PRTR-global-map³ and invited the ICG participants and other stakeholders to provide the secretariat with possible up-dates to the map. Participants then shared information on planned and existing PRTR activities at the global level, which included:

- Support to individual countries;
- Challenges related to the replacement of outdated PRTR software;
- Work on the identification of priority chemicals with regard to e.g. evaluating potential health risks and databases that cover substances addressed by different multilateral environmental agreements and other agreements and programmes.

4. The meeting also discussed how to support the ratification of the UNECE Protocol on PRTRs and the development of PRTRs worldwide. In that context, UNITAR shared its experience from current and previous projects related to the implementation of PRTR systems. It stated that an early ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs helps significantly to stimulate development of well-

¹ This document was not formally edited.

² Available under <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/intlcgimages/about.html>.

³ Available under <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/intlcgimages/about.html>.

working PRTRs. OECD informed that developing working PRTRs systems was a challenge also for OECD countries. Participants noted that establishing a well-functioning PRTRs requires long-term political commitment as the related work could take several years.

5. As for the lack of broad support to establishing and maintaining PRTRs systems, it was noted that more should be done to foster involvement of industry in the related activities and raise awareness of PRTRs among general public and other stakeholders.

III. PRTR HOT-TOPICS

A. PRTR as a reporting tool for facilities and its role as an information and learning platform with e.g. data from other sources

6. The participants noted that providing data to the public comes with a responsibility to provide contextual information in order to facilitate the correct use and interpretation of data. Contextual information linked to data presented through PRTR could:

- Help set in perspective the reported emission quantities and to link or make available information on emission permits given to facilities;
- Provide links to information on health-related issues;
- Promote a concept of “knowledge on demand” and provide data-interpretation for selected topics , also by providing more visuals of data.

B. Scope of PRTRs in the context of new developments with regard to use of chemical substances and further harmonization of different PRTR systems

7. Participants discussed the issue of making available to governments, general public and other stakeholders information on chemical substances that were actually used by facilities in the production processes. They noted that once substances to be used in industrial processes were approved by governments through respective permits, there is no further reporting on whether these substances were actually used or not. There is no database providing information on what kind of substances are needed, for example, to produce e.g. toothpaste. Different companies can use a different set of substances and in the end, it is not clear what is actually used. Pursuant to the discussion, participants noted that such information was important as to understand how to prioritise relevant policy or management decisions and how to effectively substitute dangerous chemical substances in the future.

C. PRTRs in the context of other international processes and instruments that support sound chemicals management at national level

8. It was suggested that the next generation of PRTRs was likely to include reporting streamlined with reporting obligations under other instruments. PRTRs were already used for such streamlined reporting in some countries and these helped to track e.g. any impact on relevant policies and changes in regulations.

9. Among the challenges that were encountered when following such an approach, was a lack of communication between those responsible for different reporting obligations. It was noted that conscious efforts were necessary to foster PRTRs as technical platform for reporting in relation to multiple requirements.

D. How PRTRs can help to achieve Sustainable Development Goals

10. Turning to the link to the Sustainable Development Goals participants noted that making data public helps to reduce pollution. Therefore, PRTRs with their two dimensions: i) reporting of facilities on emissions and ii) the dissemination and provision of free access to information, were of relevance to a multitude of targets across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals..

E. Good practices for a successful PRTR awareness campaign and how to better use and communicate/present PRTR data

11. It was emphasized that successful PRTR awareness raising campaigns and how to better use and communicate/present PRTR data should be discussed at the next ICG meeting and, possibly, at the future Global Round Table.

IV. Future Global Round Table

12. Considering the positive experience with the first and second Global Round Tables held in November 2013 in Geneva, and in November 2015 in Madrid, participants expressed their support to organising again a joint UNECE-OECD Global Round Tables in the future. Participants agreed that the issues of equivalence between activities, chemicals and thresholds as defined under different PRTR systems, the role of PRTRs in implementing Sustainable Development Goals and successful communication activities for PRTRs, could be possible key topics for the future Global Round Table.

V. Next meeting

13. The secretariat informed participants that, pending conformation by the host country, the next OECD Working Group on PRTRs and ICG meetings might be held back-to-back in the United States of America in June 2017.

VI. Outcomes

14. The participants reiterated their commitments to coordination and synergies for the work on PRTRs. They furthermore decided that upcoming meetings will continue discussion on the following topics:

- a) The scope of PRTRs in the context of new developments with regard to use of chemical substances and further harmonization of different PRTR systems and issues of data equivalence;
- b) Good practices for a successful PRTR awareness campaign and how to better use and communicate/present PRTR data. The United States of America will share experience on the topic during the next meeting.

15. The secretariat will also carry out a survey among participants of the ICG before the next meeting on aspects related to the future development of PRTR-systems and possible activities to support international cooperation.
