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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Tenth meeting of the Working Group 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 (PRTR WGP 10) (Geneva, 27-28 November 2023) - Statements by the EU and its Member States

Delegations will find in the Annex, for information, a compilation of statements by the EU and its Member States delivered during the tenth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs (WGP 10).

Tenth meeting of the Working Group 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
(PRTR WGP 10)
(Geneva, 27-28 November 2023)

- Statements by the EU and its Member States

Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

Good morning, in this first intervention on behalf of the EU and its Member States, we would like to thank the Secretariat for having prepared this meeting and for providing the relevant documents in a timely manner. We would also like to thank the Chairman for his words of welcome and for his introduction. We look forward to fruitful discussions over the next two days.
The agenda as proposed can be accepted by the EU and its Member States.

Agenda item 2: Status of ratification of the PRTR Protocol

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Secretariat for the updated information provided on this item. With a view to ensuring the broadest possible public access to environmental information and facilitate the public participation in decision-making as well as contribute to the prevention and reduction of pollution of the environment, as set out in article 1 of the Kiev Protocol, it is crucial to promote a wider geographical applicability of this important international legal instrument and to enhance its status as a key multilateral environmental reporting instrument. For this reason, the EU and its Member States would welcome additional ratifications, including beyond the UNECE region. In particular, countries that are parties to other regional agreements on access to environmental information and/or PRTR systems could be encouraged to access the Protocol, for instance through awareness raising and promotional activities, possibly led by the UNECE or UN.

Agenda item 3: Promotion and coordination

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Secretariat and all partner organizations for sharing information on relevant activities undertaken to promote the Protocol.

In this context, the EU and its Member States will continue to support promotion and coordination activities related to PRTRs, in particular with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), other organizations and stakeholders. We particularly appreciate the work of the International PRTR Coordination Group in promoting the Protocol globally, as it could benefit from a more cross-cutting perspective.

Such cooperation is useful in identifying areas for improvement as well as in the development of PRTRs.

The EU and its Member States encourage the Secretariat and other partner organizations to continue to seek synergies, and welcome the Secretariat's initiatives to link with other treaties and conventions, as this will enhance the implementation of the Protocol.

Agenda item 4: Compliance and reporting mechanisms

The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat and the Compliance Committee for their reports on their activities and take note of the information provided by the Secretariat on the next reporting cycle for the preparation of national implementation reports.

Agenda item 5: Subregional and national activities: achievements, needs and challenges

The EU and its Member States would like to thank all participants for sharing their experiences and progress made in implementing the Protocol and PRTRs, not only in the UNECE region but beyond as well. In this regard, we warmly welcome the statement made by the delegation of Cambodia. Once again, the EU invites all those countries that have a PRTR register in place to ratify the Protocol.

Agenda item 6: Fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol

(a) Substantive preparations:

- (i) Decision on promoting innovative approaches for modernizing pollutant release and transfer registers, their global promotion and synergy.

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau for preparing this document, which is intended to be used by Parties and other interested States and stakeholders who wish to implement possible voluntary measures in order to facilitate implementation of decision IV/2.

The overall objective and approach of the document captures some of the practices and good experiences in the development and implementation of PRTRs worldwide. In light of the progress and experience gained since the entry into force of the Protocol in 2009, the EU and its Member States find the proposal for a decision to develop and update the Protocol timely and support the objective to update the requirements of the Protocol.

The EU and its Member States welcome the document and believe that it provides a relevant basis for further discussions. However, because the process of reviewing the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register Regulation is ongoing, the EU and its MS propose to defer the discussion on the draft decision in order to be in the position to provide a final opinion on the draft decision. The EU and its MS would like to request the deletion from the draft decision of all references to the Regulation pending its revision.

Another point that the EU and its Member States would like to make, concerns plastic pollution. While recognizing the seriousness of the impact of plastic pollution on human health and the environment, we believe that the discussion on promoting the inclusion of provisions on integrated PRTRs in the legally binding instrument on plastic pollution should be postponed until the conclusion of the ongoing international negotiations.

Lastly, other aspects such as the term “modernization”, the concept of “integrated PRTR” or “single-window” or the meaning of “pollution and waste portals”, as they are currently referred to, are expected to be discussed in detail. Therefore, the EU and its Member States request to be given sufficient time to further analyze this draft proposal and to provide written comments.

(ii) Work Program for 2026–2029, including financial matter

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Secretariat for preparing this document related to the Work Program 2026-2029 for the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and support the timeline foreseen for its development.

(iii) Financial arrangements under the Protocol

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Secretariat for the preparation of this note on the future financial arrangements under the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Register. The EU and its Member States can support the text as proposed.

Agenda Item 7: Implementation of the Work Program for 2022–2025, including financial matters

The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat for the reports on the implementation of the 2022-2025 Work Program and on contributions and expenditures, and would like to invite all Parties to make pledges for the adequate implementation of the current program of work.

Agenda item 10: Adoption of the decision and outcomes of the meeting

The EU and its Member States would like to express their gratitude to the Secretariat for the smooth organization of this meeting. We also welcome the results achieved and hope to finalize all necessary preparations for MOPP5 in a timely manner in the coming session of the Working Group.
