Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs)

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Protocol on PRTRs - Summary

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Making information on pollution releases and waste transfers public, has lead to companies reducing their pollution and identifying smarter production methods

Reporting tool for industry to provide data on their emissions (monitoring pollutant releases to water, air and land over time)

Database that facilitates data management

Data visualization tool that sets emissions in spatial and other context (e.g. health, infrastructure, demographic and economic data) and makes data accessible and more useful

Tool for fact-based decision making at multiple levels

Link with other MEAs and initiatives

- PRTRs are used for multiple reporting obligations and across sectors making best use of synergies

- PRTRs are used for the sound management of chemicals

- Strong linkage with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and initiatives e.g.:
    - the Stockholm Convention and its reporting mechanism
    - Minamata Convention and UNFCCC Climate Change related reporting

Protocol on PRTRs

Scope of the Protocol

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- 65 activities (capacity/employee thresholds)

- 86 substances/substance categories, such as greenhouse gases, acid rain pollutants, ozone-depleting substances, heavy metals, substances covered by POP's Convention and certain carcinogens such as dioxins

- Releases to air, soil, water.

- Parties choose the capacity threshold system or employee threshold system for determining which facilities report.

- Off-site transfers of waste / wastewater. A threshold system defines which waste transfers have to be reported.

- Progressively include available data on diffuse releases.

- The Protocol sets minimum requirements. Parties developing PRTRs may go further, according to their national priorities and may include activities and substances that are additional to those listed in Annex I and Annex II).
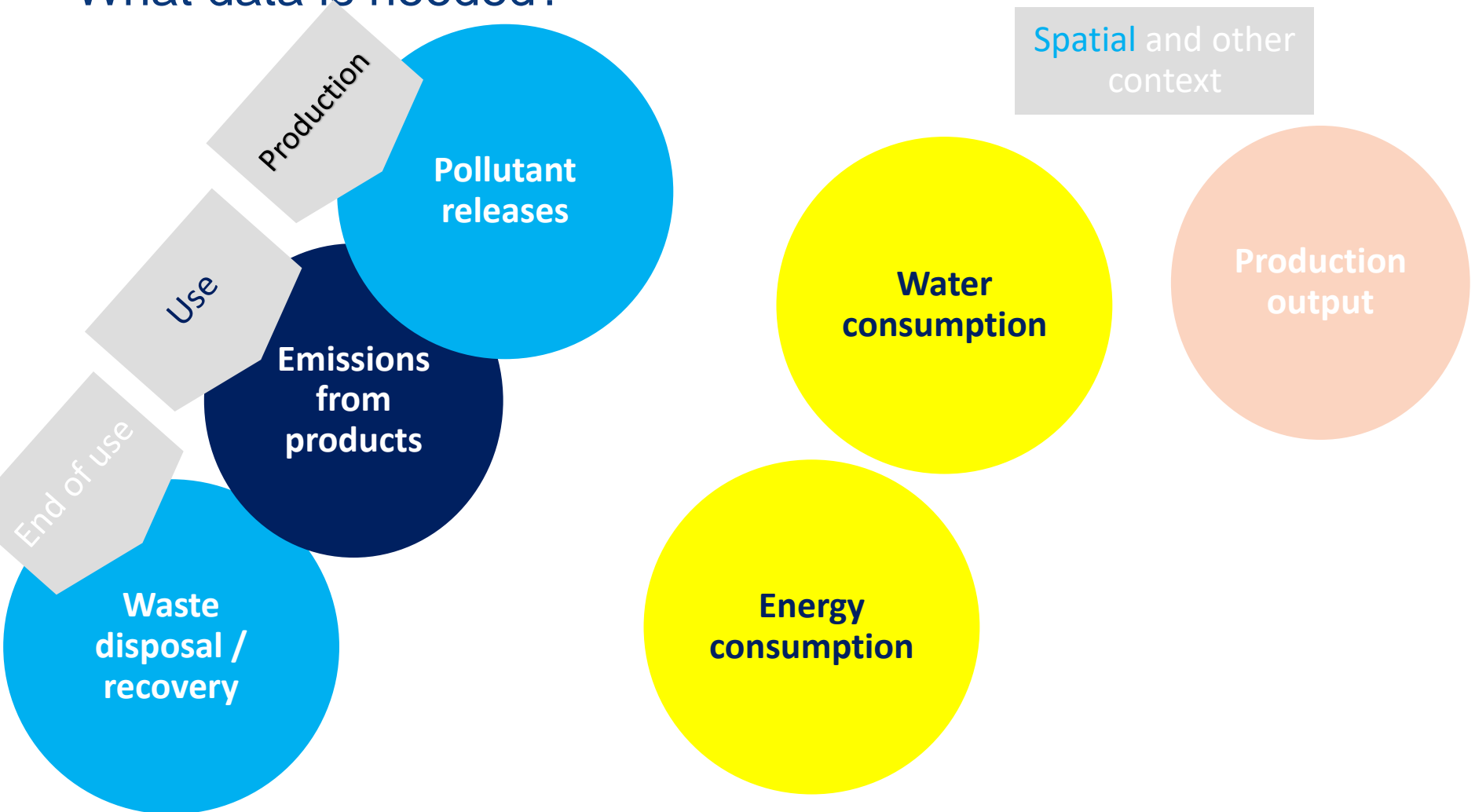
UNECE Protocol on PRTRs

Background

- Adopted at EfE Ministerial conference in Kyiv, 21 May 2003

- Protocol open to all UN Member States

- Only legally binding tool for access to environmental data with its own compliance mechanism

- Entry into force on 8 October 2009, Serbia ratified the Protocol in 2011

- 38 Parties including EU

- EU level: EPRTR Regulation was mostly based on the Protocol – now up-dated

- 2008 Guidance on implementing the Protocol on PRTRs

- 2014 Strategic Plan 2015-2020

- 2014 Maastricht declaration

- 2017 / 2021 Budva and Geneva declarations

Considering elements linked to the shift to green and sustainable economies

Green economy and circularity

What data is needed?

Production

Use

End of use

Pollutant releases

Emissions from products

Waste disposal / recovery

Spatial and other context

Water consumption

Energy consumption

Production output

Examples for uses of PRTR data

EEA and Nature articles

Link pollutant releases with environmental and health costs

Use PRTR releases to mark policy goals : reduce releases by 30%

Survey 2020
ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2020/4

Improve monitoring of in- and output parameters for industrial activities

Serbia
Chile
Put into practice polluters pay principle

Many

European CO2 emission trading (EU ETS)

USA
Share and scale pollution prevention techniques

Climate crisis / Measure and control GHG emissions
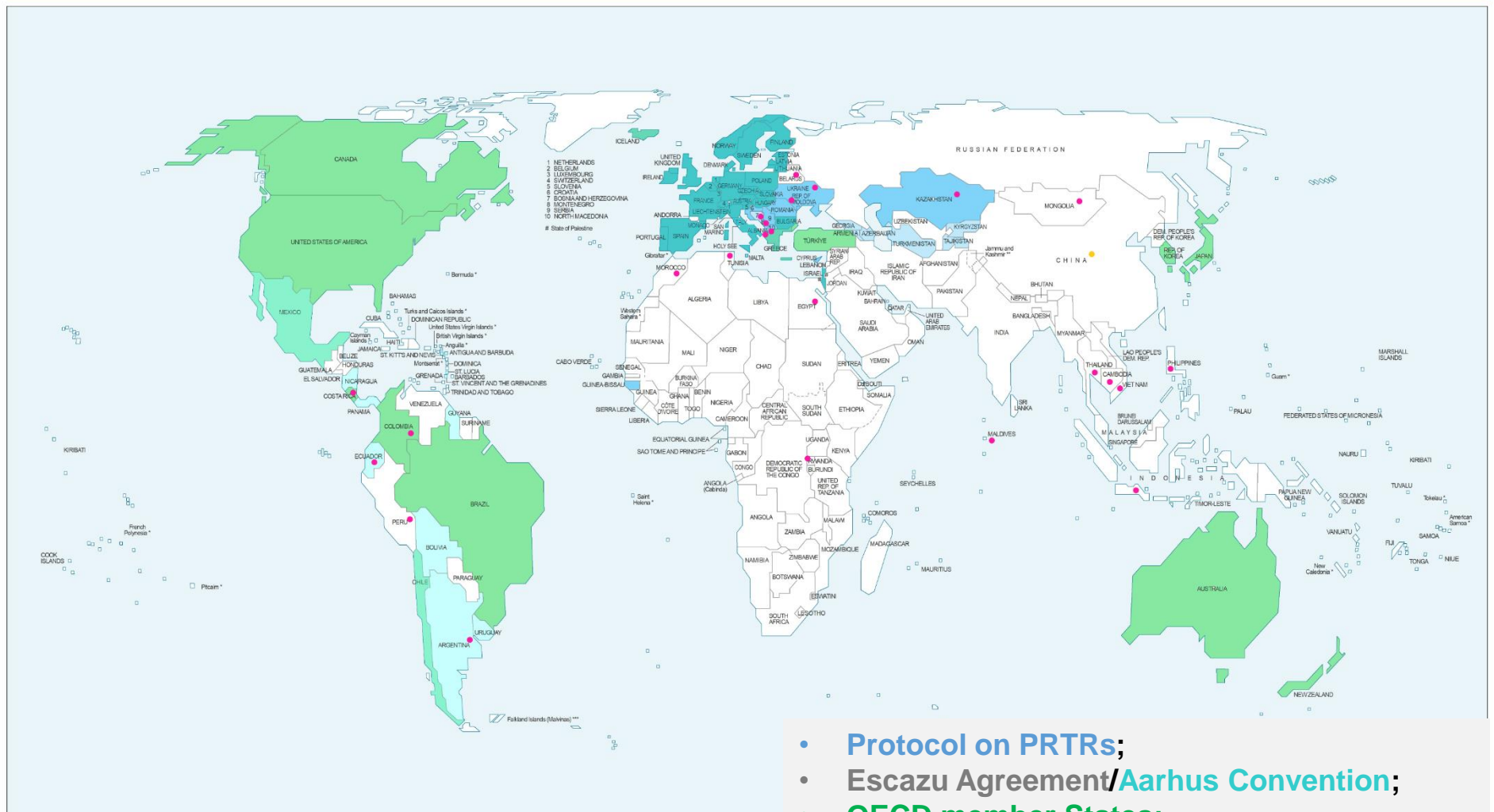
Japan

Israel
Improved decision-making processes based on environmental and human health- related information

Prepare reports on specific issues

Facilitate policy analysis and policy adaptation

All countries

Tools for local governments

STYLIZED MAP OF THE WORLD

UNITED NATIONS
Geospatial

- **Protocol on PRTRs**;
- **Escazu Agreement/Aarhus Convention**;
- **OECD member States**;
- **pink dots:** indicate countries with UNITAR, UNDP, UNEP MAP or known bilateral projects

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.
*Non-Self-Governing Territory
**Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.
***A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

Major gaps in achieving the sound management of chemicals and waste - three UNEP reports that highlight PRTRs as a solution

- Measuring Progress Towards achieving the environmental dimension of the SDGs: MeaProg2019.pdf (see page 10 with a box on PRTRs in the recommendations section)

- Inventory and analysis report: existing indicators on chemicals and waste management SAICM/IP.4/INF/39: SAICM_IP.4_INF_39.pdf (pages 14 and 15)

- Global Chemicals Outlook II: From Legacies to Innovative Solutions: Global Chemicals Outlook II: From Legacies to Innovative Solutions | UNEP - UN Environment Programme

Key developments – UNEA 5 resolutions

- **Resolution 7:** <u>Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste</u>

- **Resolution 8:** <u>Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution</u>

- **Resolution 11:** <u>Enhancing Circular Economy as a contribution to achieving sustainable consumption and production</u>

- **Resolution 12:** <u>Environmental aspects of minerals and metals management</u>

- **Resolution 14:** <u>End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument</u>

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF PLASTICS AND ASSOCIATED CHEMICALS

2023
SECRETARIAT OF THE BASEL, ROTTERDAM AND STOCKHOLM CONVENTIONS

"Monitoring and reporting are fragmented at the global, regional and national levels, and are inadequate to track progress towards global goals and targets, requiring the development of globally agreed definitions to assist in harmonising these processes. The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) provides an important model as it requires reporting on pollutant releases and transfers by operators and owners on the production facilities of plastics and some associated chemicals, as well as reporting on recovery and final disposal operations."

Link with other MEAs and initiatives

- PRTRs are used for multiple reporting obligations and across sectors making best use of synergies

- PRTRs are used for the sound management of chemicals

- Strong linkage with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and initiatives e.g.:
    - the Stockholm Convention and its reporting mechanism
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Why the Protocol on PRTRs ?

- Developed also to serve other MEAs and initiatives that address pollution
- Harmonized reporting tool and source of pollution-related data
- Fact-based decision making tool, increasing transparency and encouraging improvements – producers, consumers, governments

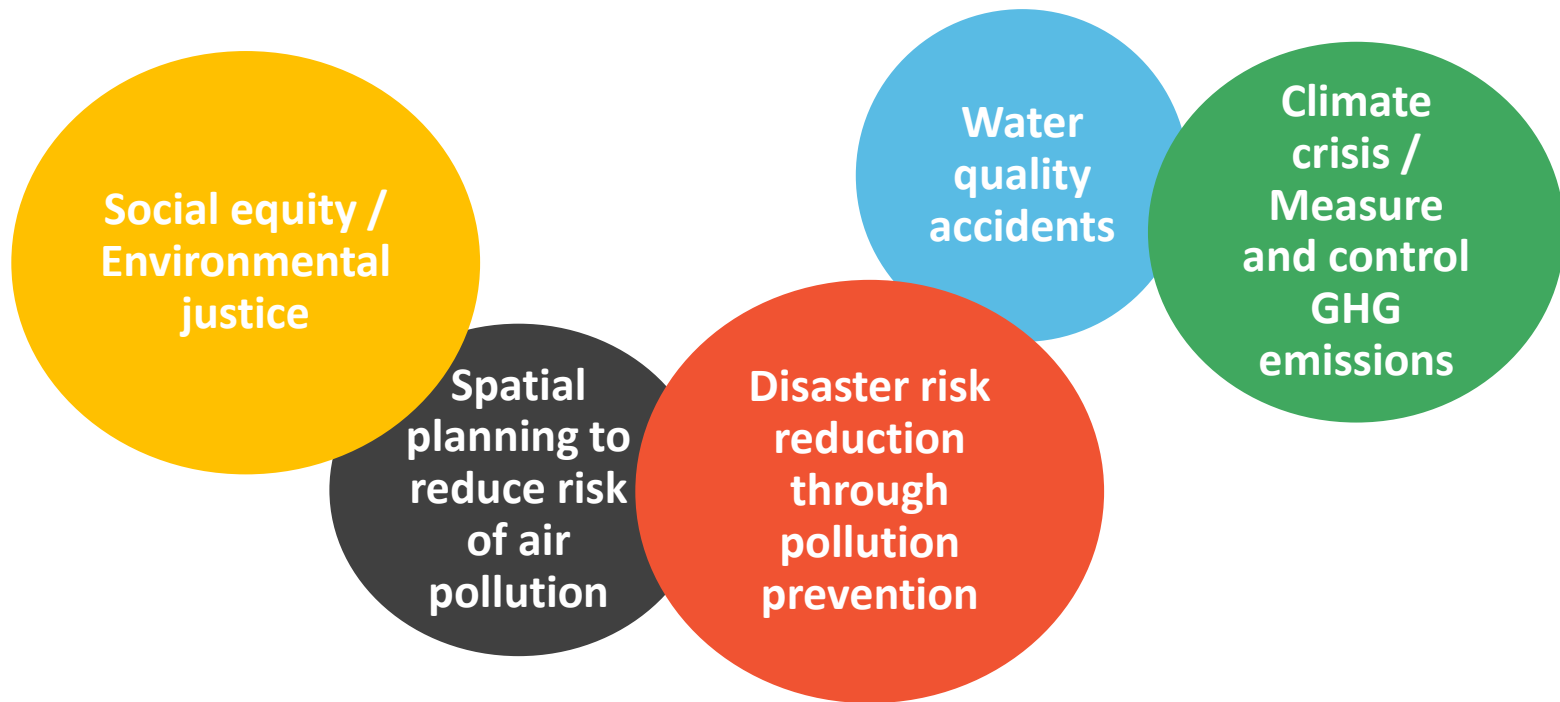Thank you!

Past issues remain relevant

Various key problems and needs identified at the 2013 capacity-building workshop in Sarajevo:

- Serbia approached Germany and Norway to request assistance in establishing an integrated system for data collection that would allow for the provision of data by the industry only once;

2016 capacity-building workshop in Minsk

- In Serbia each facility needed to report only once to fulfil its different reporting obligations and therefore with no duplication of reporting.

- Furthermore, all emissions needed to be reported, with no limitations based on reporting thresholds. In addition, owners or operators were asked to report on, e.g., used raw materials, fuels and production output. The Serbian system exceeded the requirements under the Protocol in that regard with benefits for data quality assurance based on the additional data available to the authorities. While the data was reported to the authorities it was not necessarily made available to the public. The strong information technology support further allowed the Serbian register to run with a smaller number of regular staff to assure, e.g., the quality of the data. Responding to a question, the Serbian representative further noted that the reporting by small facilities was sometimes a challenge, but mainly when operators or owners changed and the new staff was not yet familiar with the reporting process. These issues could successfully be addressed in direct consultations with the operators or owners.

Examples for uses of PRTR data

Role of Protocol on PRTRs in implementing SDGs

- Monitoring pollutant releases to water, air and land over time

- Providing electronic tool with information that decision-makers need to identify and scale up possible actions in their field of authority

- Making information on pollution releases and waste transfers public has lead to companies reducing their pollution and identifying smarter production methods

- Making PRTR data more useful through combination with other types of information (e.g. health, infrastructure, demographic and economic data)

EU shows diffuse pollutant emissions to water through electronic maps as part of their E-PRTR

Israel used PRTR air emission data to account for health risks at the planning stage of an industrial zone

Sweden makes available emission data on air quality for easy use by pupils

Norway added energy consumption, production volumes and data on emissions from consumer products to their PRTR

Serbia made reporting data to the government more easy and better quality by using its PRTR as a modular device for reporting on different international reporting obligations

Main achievements in supporting countries

➢ **Protocol on PRTRs - prototype for establishing PRTRs across the globe**

➢ **Protocol enabled to establish coordinated reporting systems on pollutants**

➢ **Encouraged innovative and efficient approaches to PRTRs use**

      - cost-efficient international reporting

      - support polluter pays principle

      - support complex decisions on economic, social and environmental matters

➢ **Int Org contributed different expertise - important role for capacity building and advisory support**

      - technical matters (e.g. UNITAR, UNEP, OECD)

      - policy recommendations (OECD, UNEP, ECE)

      - legal and institutional frameworks (ECE, UNEP)

➢ **Global Round Tables: Exceptional cooperation and synergy – UNECE & OECD, UNEP and UNITAR**

Further steps in assisting countries

> Raise awareness of decision-makers: use of PRTRs for policies in other sectors (health, energy etc)

> Promote informed decision-making processes

> Promote simple, single window reporting by polluters

> Increase integration of PRTR systems and other databases

> Improve traceability of chemicals in products

> Quantify health impact of pollution as non-preventing pollution may cost more

> Improve harmonization of PRTRs internationally

> Reach out to Youth & promote PRTR as educational tool for SDGs

> Encourage countries to accede to the Protocol as to enjoy its solid framework

Sustainable Development Goals

- Protocol is a fundamental tool for fact-based, informed SDG-related decision-making and for tracking success in achieving SDGs

- PRTRs have a twofold role as (a) reporting tool and (b) source of pollution-related data

- The Protocol contributes to the prevention and reduction of pollution by increasing transparency and by encouraging improvements in environmental performance in production and consumption

Public perception of releases of plastic into environmental media as a pollutant release has increased over recent years. Activities aiming to prevent and reduce plastic pollution have been developed throughout different sectors and by a variety of stakeholders.

At the multilateral level, we have new tools, such as:

- plastic waste amendments to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal which entered into force in January 2021, and

- resolution 5/14 entitled "End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument" with the aim of forging an international legally binding agreement by 2024 adopted in March 2022 by United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Secretariat of the UNECE Protocol on PRTRs in consultation with the Bureau prepared a note on the possible linkages between pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs) and plastic pollution, taking into consideration experiences in countries and relevant organizations.

We found out that text of resolution 5/14 includes several elements that could imply possible synergies with the promotion of PRTRs, including:

− specifying national reporting,

− increasing knowledge through awareness-raising, education and information exchange, and

− promoting cooperation with relevant regional and international instruments, avoiding duplication and promoting complementarity of action.

Note on possible linkages between PRTRs and plastic pollution was discussed on the 9th meeting of the Working group of the Parties to the Protocol in PRTRs in Geneva, November 2022 under item 5(b) - Development of the Protocol.

Working Group of the Parties took note of the Note on possible linkages between PRTRs and plastic pollution and in that context encouraged Protocol's national focal points to:

− liaise on the issues raised in the Note on possible linkages between pollutant release and transfer registers and plastic pollution with their counterpart national focal points involved in the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution;

− promote the Protocol's requirements and the replication of PRTRs in the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution;

− analyze how the existing national/regional PRTRs could be made fit for managing data on plastic pollution.

Science Policy interface (UNEA Resolution 5/8)

- As an example, Columbia, highlighted their ratification of the Escazu agreement. The country will use PRTRs to report on plastic pollution (UNEA resolution 5/14) and suggested that PRTR should fall under the scope of a future Science Policy Panel on chemicals, waste and pollution (UNEA resolution 5/8);

- Indeed, current draft scope and function of a future panel, discussed at the OEWG1.2: Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution (Bangkok, 30 January - 3 February 2023) includes text highly relevant to PRTRs (see Draft text by the contact group on scope and functions from 2 February 2023), that is:

  > The panel's scope could include "[..]all forms of pollution including pollution related to chemicals, waste and release to air, water, soil and the oceans, the promotion of innovation, transparency, inclusivity and complementarity".

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<mark>Environmental aspects of minerals and metals management</mark> (UNEA Resolution 5/12)

- Algeria, suggested to use the Protocol on PRTRs to report on the topic (UNEA resolution 5/14);

Fit for purpose

Use the potential of PRTR data

Art. 13: Public Participation in the development of PRTRs

Succesful PRTRs are found where they were designed to fit the needs of national and local stakeholders.

Global Round Table on PRTRs

- Examples from governmental, non-governmental, research and private sector organisations; including from UNECE, UNECLAC, UNEP MAP regions, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Mongolia;

- **Including on the use of PRTRs to:**
  - put into practice the **polluters-pays-principle**,
  - address several **waste management issues**,
  - **integrate** a variety of national and international **reporting obligations** and
  - **improve trust between different stakeholders**;

Global Round Table on PRTRs

- It was highlighted in a number of interventions that PRTRs:

  - help governments to fulfil their international **reporting** obligations to e.g. UNEP chemicals MEAs and UNFCCC, in a **cost-efficient** way;

  - can be combined with other data sources for **supporting complex decisions** related to economic, social and environmental matters; and

  - can enable governments and organizations to **make data available** in a form that is **useful to the public**.

Global Round Table on PRTRs

Work on Sustainable Development Goals requires:

- breaking silos and
- presenting information to stakeholders in an integrated way.

→**PRTRs can offer an effective way to address this demand.**

Major principles that guide establishment of PRTRs regarding data quality, transparency and usefulness to the public can be applied to databases of other sectors, such as health, urban planning and consumer choices, which in their turn can be linked to PRTR data.

Past issues remain relevant

Various key problems and needs identified at the 2013 capacity-building workshop in Sarajevo:

- (a)   A lack of trained governmental officials;

- (b)   A lack of awareness on PRTRs;

- (c)   A lack of clarity in existing legislation on PRTRs;

- (d)   A lack of clear and user-friendly guidelines for the use of the industry;

- (e)   Limited human resources and uneven distribution of relevant expertise;

- (f)   Legal issues in some countries in relation to data confidentiality, data dissemination or data acquisition;

- (g)   Confusion caused by the existence of various parallel regulatory and reporting regimes;

- (h)   A lack of competent and efficient inspection mechanisms that could monitor compliance with the provisions of the Protocol;

- (i)   Administrative barriers within the competent authorities hindering the process of data collection and dissemination.