



International PRTR Coordinating Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE¹

I. POLICY BACKGROUND AND MANDATE

1. Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration, as agreed by Heads of States at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, provide specific references to the establishment of national emission inventories and the right of the public to access this information. Through Chapter 19, which addresses the environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals, Agenda 21 recommends that "governments and relevant international organizations with the co-operation of industry should improve databases and information systems on toxic chemicals, such as emission inventories programmes". Chapter 19 also points out that governments should "consider adoption of community-right-to-know or other public information dissemination programmes as possible risk reduction tools". In the absence of such requirements "industry should be encouraged to adopt, on a voluntary basis, community right-to-know programmes ... including sharing of information on causes of accidental and potential releases ... and reporting on annual routine emissions of toxic chemicals to the environment."

2. The Inter-governmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) through its third meeting (Forum III) which took place in Salvador, Brazil, in October 2000, reaffirmed the importance of Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR) as an environmental policy tool to promote the sound management of chemicals. A priority for action and a PRTR action plan were adopted at Forum III. The Global Plan of Action of the Strategic Approach to the Sound Management of Chemicals (SAICM) includes activities dealing with creation and promotion of pollutant release and transfer registers. The International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) will undertake periodic reviews of the Strategic Approach. The functions of the Conference will be *inter alia* "to receive reports from all relevant stakeholders on progress in implementation of the Strategic Approach and to disseminate information as appropriate" (SAICM/ICCM.1/3).

II. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRTR COORDINATING GROUP

3. The overall objective of the International PRTR Coordinating Group is to improve coordination between international organizations, governments and other interested parties on their ongoing and planned efforts related to the further development and implementation of PRTR systems in developing countries or

¹ As revised by the International PRTR Coordinating Group at its third meeting (Paris, 11 March 2008).

counties with economies in transition. The International PRTR Coordinating Group operates on the basis of consensus. It will, through activities implemented by its participants, either individually or jointly:

- Promote mechanisms to harmonize activities and avoid duplication of efforts;
- Increase, through collaboration, co-ordination through information exchange between its members, the efficiency of international efforts to bring together expertise on PRTRs;
- Enhance coordination of PRTR international [outreach, training and capacity building] activities;
- Facilitate the exchange of information on ongoing and planned PRTR activities of its members;
- Enhance the network of PRTR resource institutions and individuals; and
- Coordinate the preparation of reports concerning international PRTR activities to be submitted for consideration to relevant fora, e.g. the IFCS and SAICM.

III. PARTICIPATION AND STRUCTURE

4. The International PRTR Coordinating Group operates on an interim basis as a self-standing independent body. Consideration of operating under the auspices of another international body will be kept under review as international chemical management coordination evolves.

5. Coordinating Group meetings will be organized by a voluntary Bureau consisting of participants of those organizations that are active in international PRTR activities, including UNEP, UNECE and UNITAR, as well as representatives of countries, regional organizations and other groups that are considered participants.

6. Intergovernmental organizations, governments, and international industry, labour and public interest nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that have significant activities in the area of focus can be invited to participate by the Bureau. Industry, labour and public interest NGOs are responsible for coordinating representation and membership within and among their respective nongovernmental organization groupings. As deemed beneficial to effectively carrying out the work, the Bureau may invite other groups with significant activities in the area of focus to participate, following circulation of a list of such proposed groups to the participants of the Coordinating Group and taking into account any comments received on the proposed list of invitees.

7. Each participating organization, government or group shall be requested by the Secretariat to designate a representative. In designating a representative to the Coordinating Group, members should take into account the need for consistency and involvement. Participants may, subject to prior discussion with the Chairperson and Secretariat, be accompanied at meetings by advisors where their expertise is specifically required.

8. The Coordinating Group will meet at least once every year to establish a schedule of activities and identify issues to be addressed during the year and to monitor progress made on issues and actions previously considered. Priority issues will be determined by taking into account the interests and priorities of Coordinating Group participants.

9. Whenever possible, meetings of the Coordinating Group will be organized around major international PRTR events to make effective use of limited travel resources.

10. The Coordinating Group will be serviced by a Secretariat. The main functions of the Secretariat will be to:

- Facilitate communication and information exchange among members of the Coordinating Group;
- Maintain records of group membership and activities to ensure meeting procedures are consistent;
- Prepare meeting records;
- Draft progress reports and other documentation relevant to the work of the Coordinating Group; and
- Ensure that the international PRTR high-level web portal contains up-to-date information on the Coordinating Group and in particular the terms of reference, list of members and the designated representatives.

Depending upon the agreed activities of the Coordinating Group, the Secretariat could be requested to take on additional functions, resources permitting.

11. A Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson of the Coordinating Group will be elected biennially on a rotating basis through a consensus-based process from the designated representatives of the participants. In the absence of the serving Chairperson for a meeting, the Vice-Chairperson will serve as meeting chair. In consultation with the Secretariat, the Chairperson will call meetings of the Coordinating Group, provide input for the meeting agenda and represent the Coordinating Group, as appropriate, on issues which have been previously agreed by the group.

12. Ad hoc working groups may be established under the Coordinating Group in order to coordinate specific activities.

13. Each member of the Coordinating Group will cover the costs of his/her own participation in the meetings of the Group. The resources required for the Secretariat of the Coordinating Group will be provided by the organization(s) designated to carry out the secretariat function. Resources required for undertaking any specific activities that the Coordinating Group might agree to undertake will be considered on an ad hoc basis.