

Factsheets on Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other international frameworks

as

Background note to UNEP capacity building workshop

**Advancing effective Multilateral Environmental Agreements
implementation in Central Asia:
Promoting synergies and rights-based approaches to combat
pollution**

**17-18-19 June 2025
Almaty, Kazakhstan**

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Introduction

Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are key instruments of international environmental governance and international environmental law. They are separate treaties to which States, regional economic integration organizations and, in some instances, international organizations have become a Party. They intend to promote international cooperation on a specific set of environmental issues, such as the protection of the ozone layer, biodiversity, and sustainable management of hazardous chemicals and waste. The United Nations Secretary-General usually serves as the depositary for each treaty.

Each of the MEAs provides for their own independent governance structures, decision-making bodies, such as Conferences or Meetings of the Parties (COPs/MOPs), and rules of procedure. They operate in accordance with their provisions and the decisions of their governing bodies. The policy and financial decisions of the governing bodies of MEAs guide their implementation and related programmes of work and provide policy direction to the MEA Secretariats on all substantive and administrative issues. Funds for the implementation of MEAs are provided primarily by the Parties to the respective agreements and other sources, in accordance with applicable regulations and rules. UNEP has been designated by the governing bodies of 15 MEAs, eight global and seven regional, to provide secretariat functions, as clarified in the [UNEA 2/18 resolution](#).

UNEP works in close partnership with many other MEAs which are not under its administration, such as those under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Under the UNECE administration 5 MEAs have been adopted, all of which are now in force. Three out of five MEAs are open for accession to all United Nations Member States. The governing bodies of the UNECE MEAs are serviced by the UNECE Secretariat, which supports with the monitoring and implementation. The 5 MEAs have also been supplemented by several Amendments and Protocols.

The sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) in 2024 tasked the UN Environment Programme with: promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration for the national implementation of MEAs ([UNEA 6/4](#)); facilitating the coherent and effective implementation of the MEAs at the regional and national levels, on a Member State-driven basis, including through the [Fifth Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law](#) and in cooperation with United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) ([UNEA 6/6](#)); and cooperating with relevant MEAs to raise awareness and foster national and regional action to address the multiple and transboundary impacts of air pollution and improve air quality globally ([UNEA 6/10](#)).

This document serves as a background note to the workshop organized by UNEP in cooperation with UNECE: “Advancing effective Multilateral Environmental Agreements implementation in Central Asia: Promoting synergies and rights-based approaches to combat pollution.” Its purpose is to purely provide information background for participants on the MEAs that will be the focus of the workshop.

MEAs at a glance

Name of UNEP-administered Global MEAs	Entry into force	Parties *as of May 2025	Secretariat location
Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal	1992	191	Geneva, Switzerland
Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade	2004	167	Rome, Italy and Geneva, Switzerland
Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	2004	186	Geneva, Switzerland
Minamata Convention on Mercury	2017	151	Geneva, Switzerland
Name of UNECE-administered MEAs	Entry into Force	Parties *as of May 2025	Secretariat Location
Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention)	1983	51	Geneva, Switzerland
Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)	2001	48	Geneva, Switzerland
Kyiv Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs)	2009	38	Geneva, Switzerland

UNEP-Administered Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other international frameworks

1. Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention)



BASEL CONVENTION

The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal is the most comprehensive global environmental treaty on hazardous and other wastes requiring special consideration. The Basel Convention aims to protect human health and the environment from the negative effects resulting from the inappropriate management of hazardous wastes, including in the context of their movements across borders. The scope of application of the Basel Convention covers a wide range of hazardous and other wastes and its provisions centre around the principal aims of reducing waste generation; promoting environmentally sound management of wastes; restricting transboundary movements of hazardous wastes except where it is perceived to be in accordance with the principles of “environmentally sound management”; and applying a regulatory system in cases where transboundary movements are permissible. Examples of wastes regulated by the Basel Convention include biomedical and healthcare waste, electrical and electronic waste, plastic wastes, used lead acid batteries, persistent organic pollutant (POP) wastes, mercury wastes, etc.

- Adopted on 22 March 1989 and entered into force on 5 May 1992.
- 191 Parties to the Convention.

Governance structure

The [Conference of the Parties \(COP\) to the Basel Convention](#) meets every two years to review and evaluate the implementation of the Convention. A Bureau composed of a President and nine Vice-Presidents is elected at each meeting of the COP. The COP has established the following subsidiary bodies which meet in between meetings of the COP:

- The Open-ended Working Group which, among other things, assists the COP in developing and keeping under continuous review specific operational policies and decisions taken by the COP, considers and advises the COP on issues relating to policy, technical, scientific, legal, institutional, administration and other aspects of the implementation of the Convention, prepares its work plan for consideration by the COP, and reports to the COP on the activities it has carried out between COP meetings.
- The Implementation and Compliance Committee which assists Parties in complying with their obligations under the Convention and facilitates, promotes, monitors and

aims to secure the implementation of and compliance with the obligations under the Convention.

The COP routinely establishes ad hoc expert groups to carry out specific work in between the COP meetings (e.g. updating technical guidelines on specific waste streams). It also establishes multi-stakeholder partnerships which bring together Parties and non-State stakeholders to tackle specific issues.

Secretariat

The Basel Convention is served by the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions Secretariat (BRS Secretariat). The BRS Secretariat has its origins in the omnibus decision taken in 2013 ([BC.Ex-2/1](#), [RC.Ex-2/1](#) and [SC.Ex-2/1](#)), when the conferences of the parties to the three legally autonomous conventions agreed to the matrix-based management approach. In accordance with [Article 16](#) of the Basel Convention, [Article 20](#) of the Rotterdam Convention and [Article 19](#) of the Stockholm Convention, the BRS Secretariat main functions are to facilitate implementation of the BRS Conventions and synergies at the global, regional and national levels; organize and services the BRS COPs, assist in delivery of technical assistance, scientific support, legal, administration and financial resources oversight services, governance activities, conference and information services; develop and implement a resource mobilization strategy; strengthen cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and increase awareness of the goals of the BRS Conventions.

Financial mechanism and technical assistance

The Convention does not establish a financial mechanism. It provides for the delivery of technical assistance to developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition to assist them in building their capacity (human resources, policy, legal and institutional frameworks) to fulfil their obligations under the Basel Convention. Technical assistance is delivered through face-to-face and online trainings, partnerships as well as through the network of 14 Regional Centres that have been established under the Convention to provide training and facilitate technology transfer to address specific regional or sub-regional needs of the Parties (see annex for the list of Basel Convention regional centres). Parties can also access support through other financial mechanisms such as UNEP's [Special Programme](#).

Implementation and compliance

All Parties must implement and comply with the obligations under the Basel Convention. Implementation and compliance matters fall within the mandate of the Implementation and Compliance Committee established in 2002 under Article 15, paragraph 5 (e) of the Convention, which has the dual mandate to:

- Assist with any submission made to it in accordance with the terms of reference relating to the compliance of an individual Party.
- Review general issues of implementation and compliance.

Relevant Amendments and Protocols

Plastic Waste Amendments

At its 14th meeting held from 29 April to 10 May 2019, the COP adopted amendments to Annexes II, VIII, and IX to the Convention with the objectives of enhancing the control of the transboundary movements of plastic waste and clarifying the scope of the Convention as it applies to such waste. These amendments entered into force on 1 January 2021. Through the “Plastic Waste Amendments”, the Annexes to the Convention specify the new categories of plastic waste that will be subject to the Convention’s control procedure for transboundary movements, but also stipulate [provisions pertaining to waste minimization](#) as well as to [the environmentally sound management of wastes](#). To assist Parties in implementing the provisions related to the new amendments, COP 14 adopted several other decisions, including decision BC-14/13, initiating further actions to address plastic waste under the Convention.¹

Specifically, through decision BC-14/13, the COP established the [Global Partnership on Plastic Waste](#) aimed at promoting the environmentally sound management of plastic waste and preventing their generation. Through that same decision, the COP also requested the updating of technical guidelines on the identification of and environmentally sound management of plastic waste as well as the inclusion of consideration related to plastic waste into the current process for the review of the Annexes to the Convention.

Ban Amendment

On 5 December 2019, the “[Ban Amendment](#)” to the Basel Convention entered into force, providing for the prohibition of transboundary movement of hazardous waste destined for disposal operations from Parties in Annex VII (OECD, EU member states and Liechtenstein) to non-Annex VII countries (all other countries). The Amendment also prohibits transboundary movements of hazardous wastes pursuant to Article 1.1 (a) (wastes controlled by the Convention except for those considered or defined as hazardous by the national legislation) destined for disposal. This entry into force is seen as a flagship international effort to ensure that transboundary movements only take place to those countries with the capacity to manage hazardous wastes in an environmentally sound manner, while allowing Parties wishing to do so to receive such wastes.

E-waste Amendment

On 1st January 2025, [The E-waste Amendment](#) entered into force, with the objectives of enlarging the control of transboundary movements of e-waste and making all electronic and electrical waste subject to the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure.

¹ Decisions BC-14/9 on cooperation with the World Customs Organization on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, BC-14/10 on national reporting, BC-14/18 on technical assistance, BC-14/19 on the Basel Convention Partnership Programme, BC-14/21 on international cooperation and coordination, and BC-14/23 on the clearing house mechanism for information exchange.

Basel Protocol on Liability and Compensation

The [Basel Protocol on Liability and Compensation](#) was adopted at the [Fifth Conference of Parties \(COP-5\)](#) on 10 December 1999. The Protocol talks began in 1993 in response to the concerns of developing countries about their lack of funds and technologies for coping with illegal dumping or accidental spills.

The objective of the Protocol is to provide for a comprehensive regime for liability as well as adequate and prompt compensation for damage resulting from the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and other wastes, including incidents occurring because of illegal traffic in those wastes. The Protocol addresses who is financially responsible in the event of an incident. Each phase of a transboundary movement, from the point at which the wastes are loaded on the means of transport to their export, international transit, import, and final disposal, is considered.

The Protocol has not yet entered into force.

- Contact: brs@un.org

Annex: The Basel Convention Regional and Coordinating Centres for Capacity Building and Technology Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe

Russia, Moscow	
Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for CIS countries, Russian Federation (BCRC Russia)	The Centre has expertise in various Basel technical guidance e.g., electrical and electronic waste. The centre has expertise in developing module on the remediation and disposal of hazardous wastes relating to Basel Convention and building a registry of the technologies available in the Russian Federation.
Slovak Republic, Bratislava	
Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for Central Europe, Slovakia (BCRC Slovakia)	The Centre has expertise with combating illegal traffic, legal assistance, ESM of used oils, bio medical waste, POPs, e-waste and waste minimization.

2. Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (Rotterdam Convention)



ROTTERDAM CONVENTION

The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade is a comprehensive global treaty that aims at protecting human health and the environment by: promoting shared responsibilities and cooperative efforts associated with the international trade of hazardous industrial chemicals and pesticides; facilitating exchange of information about chemicals; providing for a national decision-making process on their import and export; and disseminating such national decisions on the export and import to the Parties. The Convention helps countries avoid the unwanted import of chemicals listed in [Annex III](#), by subjecting their import and export to a Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure. The PIC procedure requires countries to take decisions on whether they wish to receive future shipments of listed chemicals, based on decision guidance documents that provide information about the risks associated with the handling and use of the chemicals. Exporting Parties have the responsibility to ensure that exports do not occur contrary to the import decision of countries. The Convention covers pesticides and industrial chemicals that have been banned or restricted for health or environmental reasons by the Parties. There are currently 55 chemicals, out of which 36 are pesticides (including three severely hazardous pesticide formulations) and 18 industrial chemicals and one chemical in both the pesticide and the industrial chemical categories.

- Adopted on 10 September 1998 and entered into force on 24 February 2004.
- 166 Parties to the Convention.

Governance structure

The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Rotterdam Convention meets every two years to review and evaluate the implementation of the Convention. A Bureau composed of a President and four Vice-Presidents is elected at each meeting of COP. The COP has established the following subsidiary bodies which meet in between meetings of the COP. The Chemical Review Committee reviews chemicals and pesticide formulations according to the criteria set out by the Convention in Annexes II and IV respectively and makes recommendations to COP for listing such chemicals in Annex III. The Compliance Committee that was established in 2019 under Article 17 of the Convention (see below).

Secretariat

The Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention is jointly hosted by UNEP and the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN (FAO). The UNEP administered Secretariat is one part

of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions Secretariat (BRS Secretariat. The BRS Secretariat has its origins in the omnibus decision taken in 2013 (BC.Ex-2/1, [RC.Ex-2/1](#) and SC.Ex-2/1), when the conferences of the parties to the three legally autonomous conventions agreed to the matrix-based management approach. In accordance with [Article 16](#) of the Basel Convention, [Article 20](#) of the Rotterdam Convention and [Article 19](#) of the Stockholm Convention, the BRS Secretariat main functions are to facilitate implementation of the BRS Conventions and synergies at the global, regional and national levels; organize and services the BRS COPs, assist in delivery of technical assistance, scientific support, legal, administration and financial resources oversight services, governance activities, conference and information services; develop and implement a resource mobilization strategy; strengthen cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and increase awareness of the goals of the BRS Conventions.

Financial mechanism and technical assistance

The Convention does not establish a financial mechanism. The Convention provides for the promotion of technical assistance among the Parties to assist developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition in building their capacity to fulfil their obligations under the Convention. The Secretariat, together with its partners, provides technical assistance to developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition. In addition to face-to-face training, online webinars are offered, and several guidance documents are made available as a “Resource Kit”.

Implementation and Compliance

In accordance with Article 4 of the Convention, each Party shall designate one or more national authorities that shall be authorized to act on its behalf in the performance of the administrative functions required by the Convention. Each Party is also expected to take measures to establish and strengthen its national infrastructures and institutions for the effective implementation of the Convention.

Compliance matters under the Convention fall under the mandate of the [Compliance Committee](#), which was established in 2019 under Article 17 of the Convention and entered into force on 6 November 2020, with the dual mandate to:

- Deal with submissions relating to the compliance of an individual Party, and in this regard, may assist individual Parties in resolving compliance difficulties on receipt of a valid submission;
 - Review systemic issues of general compliance.
- Contact: brs@un.org - PIC@fao.org

3. Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm Convention)



STOCKHOLM CONVENTION

The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants protects human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants (POPs) through a range of measures aimed at reducing and ultimately eliminating their releases. POPs are organic chemical substances – that is, carbon-based – that remain intact for many years and become widely distributed throughout the environment with toxic impact on both humans and wildlife. POPs accumulate in the fatty tissues of living organizations and are found at higher concentrations in the food chain. The Convention currently targets 30 POPs, 24 of which are targeted for elimination, two are restricted and five are listed for the prevention and reduction of unintentional releases. Three of the latter are also listed for elimination.

- Adopted on 22 May 2001 and entered into force on 17 May 2004.
- 186 Parties to the Convention.

Governance structure

The Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Stockholm Convention meets every two years to review and evaluate the implementation of the Convention. A Bureau composed of a President and nine Vice-Presidents is elected at each meeting of COP. The Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee (POPRC) is a subsidiary body to the Stockholm Convention that meets in between COP to review proposals made by the Parties to list new chemicals to the annexes to the Convention, in accordance with a strong scientific review process laid out in Article 8 of the Stockholm Convention. Based on the risk profile and risk management evaluation, POPRC then recommends COP to consider listing the chemicals. The COP can establish intersessional groups in between its meetings to carry out specific work mandated in a COP decision (e.g. the DDT expert group).

Secretariat

The Stockholm Convention is served by the BRS Secretariat. The BRS Secretariat has its origins in the omnibus decision taken in 2013 (BC.Ex-2/1, RC.Ex-2/1 and [SC.Ex-2/1](#)), when the conferences of the parties to the three legally autonomous conventions agreed to the matrix-based management approach. In accordance with [Article 16](#) of the Basel Convention, [Article 20](#) of the Rotterdam Convention and [Article 19](#) of the Stockholm Convention, the BRS Secretariat main functions are to facilitate implementation of the BRS Conventions and synergies at the global, regional and national levels; organize and services the BRS COPs, assist in delivery of technical assistance, scientific support, legal, administration and financial resources oversight services, governance activities, conference and information services;

develop and implement a resource mobilization strategy; strengthen cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and increase awareness of the goals of the BRS Conventions.

Financial mechanism and technical assistance

The Stockholm Convention provides for the provision of technical assistance and financial resources to support developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition in implementing the Convention. Under Article 14, the Convention identifies the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the principal entity entrusted with the operations of the financial mechanism.

The relationship between the COP and the GEF is defined by a Memorandum of Understanding that was agreed by the COP and the GEF Council. To carry out its role as part of the Convention's financial mechanism, the GEF operates under the guidance of the COP regarding eligibility, overall strategy, policy and programme priorities for accessing and utilizing financial resources. Additional and updated guidance to the GEF is routinely adopted at the meetings of the COP.

The COP conducts periodic reviews of the financial mechanism, including the effectiveness of the mechanism established and its ability to address the changing needs of developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition.

The Convention has also established a network of 16 Stockholm Convention regional centres with relevant expertise and capacity to assist countries, taking full account of regional needs and opportunities (see annex for the list of Stockholm Convention regional centres).

Compliance

Under article 7 of the Convention, each Party is expected to develop and implement a plan for the implementation of its obligations under the Convention. Each Party is also expected to report to the COP on the measures it has taken to implement the provisions of the Convention and on the effectiveness of such measures in meeting the objectives of the Convention as per article 15.

According to [Article 17](#) of the Convention, the COP shall develop and approve procedures and institutional mechanisms for determining non-compliance with the provisions of the Convention and for the treatment of the Parties found to be non-compliant.

Through decision SC 11/19, the COP 11 established the Compliance Committee as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention with a double mandate to:

- Consider submissions and questions relating to Parties' compliance relating to individual Parties;
- Examine systemic issues of general compliance and implementation.

- *Contact:* brs@un.org

Annex: The Stockholm Convention Regional and Subregional Centres for Capacity Building and the Transfer of Technology in Central and Eastern Europe

Czech Republic, Brno	
<u>Stockholm Convention Regional Centre for Capacity-building and the Transfer of Technology, Czech Republic (SCRC Czech Republic)</u>	The centre has expertise in on environmental, legal, science-policy, chemicals management and health expertise (environmental chemistry, ecotoxicology, risk analysis, analytical chemistry, environmental monitoring and biomonitoring, data management and analyses, remediation of hotspots, chemicals management and development of legal and enforcement measures), accredited analytical laboratories with training equipment, practical management of toxic chemicals and prevention of their health effects. Work with POPs, EDCs, mercury, and emerging pollutants.
Russian Federation, Novosibirsk	
<u>Stockholm Convention Regional Centre for Capacity-building and the Transfer of Technology, Russian Federation (SCRC Russian Federation)</u>	The centre has expertise in environmental quality monitoring including trace and ultra-trace level POPs monitoring in different matrices, undertaking annual scientific expeditions in remote areas of Siberia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia for monitoring POPs level in the waterbodies and works in the prevention and response to chemical emergencies.

4. Minamata Convention on Mercury (Minamata Convention)



The Minamata Convention on Mercury is named after a bay in Japan where, in the mid-20th century, mercury-tainted industrial wastewater poisoned thousands of people, leading to severe health damage that became known as the “Minamata disease”. The objective of the Convention is to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds. It contains, in support of this objective, provisions that relate to the entire life cycle of mercury. The treaty addresses ending the mining of mercury, restricting its export and import, phasing out its use in various products, controlling its emissions and releases, and ensuring its safe storage and disposal as waste.

Since the entry into force in 2017, 153 Parties have come together to control the mercury supply and trade, reduce the use, emission, and release of mercury, raise public awareness, and build the necessary institutional capacity to safeguard human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury.

- Adopted on 10 October 2013 and entered into force on 16 August 2017.
- 153 Parties to the Convention.

Governance structure

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the governing body of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Through the decisions taken at its meetings, the COP advances the implementation of the Convention and keeps implementation under continuous review. The COP is supported in its work by a Bureau, consisting of a President and nine Vice-Presidents, one of whom acts as Rapporteur. Since COP-2, Bureau members commence their term at the closure of the meeting at which they are elected until the closure of the following ordinary meeting of the COP. Each of the five UN regional groups is represented by two Bureau members, elected from among the representatives of the parties present at the meeting.

An Implementation and Compliance Committee was established as a subsidiary body to the COP to promote the implementation of the Convention and review compliance with all its provisions. Article 15 of the Convention specifies the role, composition and functions of this Committee.

Secretariat

The Secretariat is established through [Article 24\(1\)](#) of the Convention. In accordance with [Article 24\(2\)](#), its main functions are to organize and services the COP and its subsidiary bodies, facilitate implementation of the Convention, coordinate, as appropriate, with the secretariats of relevant international bodies, particularly other chemicals and waste conventions, assist Parties in the exchange of information related to the implementation of this Convention, prepare and

make available to the Parties periodic reports based on information received pursuant to Articles 15 and 21 and other available information, enter into such administrative and contractual arrangements as may be required for the effective discharge of its functions, and perform the other secretariat functions specified in the Convention and such other functions as may be determined by the COP.

Financial mechanism

The Minamata Convention on Mercury, under Article 13, set up a financial mechanism to support developing country parties and parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention. The Mechanism is composed of the:

- Global Environment Facility (GEF)
- Specific International Programme (SIP) Trust Fund to support capacity-building and technical assistance.

The relation between the GEF and COP is governed by an MOU which outlines that the GEF, as the financing mechanism for several international conventions, operates under the guidance of the COP on policies, priorities and access to funding. The GEF provides financial support based on COP decisions, particularly to facilitate the implementation of environmental frameworks, including the Minamata Convention. The GEF contributions include both enabling activities (such as assisting countries with ratification) and ongoing support for implementation.

The Specific International Programme (SIP) Trust Fund is another part of the overall financial mechanism established under article 13 to support capacity building and technical assistance. The fund is hosted through the Convention's Secretariat and establishes a Governing Board which oversees and implements the guidance provided by the Conference of the Parties, including decision-making on projects and project management.

The COP conducts periodic reviews of the financial mechanism, including the level of funding, the guidance provided by the COP, and the mechanism's effectiveness and ability to address the changing needs of developing-country parties and parties with economies in transition. Based on such reviews, the COP will take appropriate action to improve the effectiveness of the financial mechanism.

- Contact: MEA-MinamataSecretariat@un.org

5. Global Framework on Chemicals



Global Framework on Chemicals

The [Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste](#) (GFC) is a comprehensive international initiative adopted in September 2023 at the [Fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management](#) (ICCM5) in Bonn, Germany and succeeds the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). The Framework presents a comprehensive plan to guide countries and stakeholders in jointly addressing the lifecycle of chemicals and reducing emissions and releases of chemicals and waste to the environment, which *inter alia* are a [significant source of air pollution](#) and an obstacle to the realization of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment recognized by [UNGA resolution 76/300](#).

The aim of the GFC is to prevent or, where prevention is not feasible, minimize harm from chemicals and waste to protect the environment and human health, including that of vulnerable groups and workers. The Framework is cross-sectoral and action-oriented, as it encompasses the involvement of all relevant sectors, including environment, health, agriculture, and labour, and stakeholders across the life cycle of chemicals, as well as considerations of environmental and social aspects that are critical to the sound management of chemicals and waste. The framework also emphasizes the importance of strong governance mechanisms, transparency, and accountability in its implementation.

Governance structure

[Section X](#) of the GFC elaborates on the institutional arrangements and governance structure. The central governing body of the GFC is the International Conference, which is convened every three years. Its primary functions include adopting rules of procedure, overseeing implementation and reviewing progress, and promoting cooperation among international instruments and programmes related to chemicals and waste. The International conference is supported by the Bureau, which reflects the multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral nature of the GFC, the principles of equitable geographical representation and gender balance, and the representation from different sectors among government representatives.

Secretariat

The Secretariat of the GFC is hosted by UNEP and, under the guidance of the International Conference, performs several functions:

- Promoting and facilitating the implementation of the GFC, including capacity-building and technical assistance.

- Strengthening working relationships with participating organizations and other United Nations bodies.
- Facilitating the exchange of scientific and technical information.
- Supporting the functioning of technical, policy, and scientific subsidiary and ad hoc expert bodies.
- Reporting to the International Conference on the implementation by all stakeholders.

Financial mechanism and technical assistance

[Section X](#) and [Section IX](#) of the GFC elaborates on the financial mechanism and technical assistance to provided by and for the stakeholders. The GFC establishes that all stakeholders support the work of the Secretariat by voluntarily contributing financial and in-kind resources. The contributions, where possible, are defined at the beginning of the budget cycle by an agreement between the respective organization and the Secretariat.

To support countries in implementing the GFC, a [Global Framework on Chemicals Fund](#) (GFC Fund), administered by UNEP, was established. The objective of the GFC Fund is to support implementation activities in developing countries, least developed countries, Small Island Developing States and countries with economies in transition, by financing projects and programmes that will support transformative change to prevent, or where prevention is not feasible, minimize harm from chemicals and waste to protect the environment and human health, including vulnerable groups and workers. The Fund complements existing financial mechanisms, such as the [Special Programme](#), the [Specific International Programme](#) and the [Global Environment Facility](#) and funds that support biodiversity and climate action, amongst others to build on national projects or activities and generate sustainable project outputs nationally, regionally and globally.

Implementation and Compliance

Under [Section XI](#) of the GFC, all stakeholders are invited to report to the International Conference, through the Secretariat, on implementation efforts and progress towards indicators and milestones, and on contributions to implement the GFC in meeting the strategic objectives and their associated targets towards the vision. The Secretariat prepares a compilation of the reports received for a presentation to the International Conference, accessible to the public.

- Contact: unep-gfc.secretariat@un.org

UNECE-Administered Multilateral Environmental Agreements

1. Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention)



The Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution establishes the principles of international cooperation for air pollution control and created an institutional framework that has since brought together science and policy. In the 1960s, scientists investigated the causes of “acid rain,” which was devastating forests, depleting fish populations in lakes, and threatening entire ecosystems across the Northern Hemisphere. They discovered that air pollutants — many emitted thousands of kilometers away — were the primary culprit. To address this issue, 32 countries in the pan-European region decided to cooperate to reduce air pollution. The backbone of the Convention has been the development of a shared knowledge base, supported by joint monitoring and modeling programs, delivering crucial data on the emission, transport and deposition of air pollutants. The Convention has developed over time and is now complemented by 8 Protocols, 7 of which contain legally binding targets for emission reductions and include additional pollutants, such as ground-level ozone, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals, and particulate matter.

- Adopted on 13 November 1979 and entered into force on 16 March 1983.
- 51 Parties to the Convention.

Governance structure

The Executive Body is the governing body of the Convention. It is composed of representatives of Parties to the Convention – governments of countries that have accepted, ratified or acceded to it. Pursuant to [Article 10](#) of the Convention, the Executive Body shall review the implementation of the Convention. It may establish, as appropriate, Working Groups to consider matters related to the implementation and development of the Convention. The Executive Body agrees on a biannual workplan and approves financial issues related to workplan activities.

The [Working Group on Strategies and Review \(WGSR\)](#) serves as the principal negotiating body for the Convention. It plays a critical role in assisting the Executive Body with policy-oriented activities, including: assessing scientific and technical activities relating to the preparation and revision of protocols; negotiating revisions to existing protocols and the preparation of new ones; reviewing draft guidance documents produced under different protocols; providing a forum for reporting on strategies, policies and measures; and preparing proposals for any strategic development under the Convention. The WGSR receives reports from several Task Forces. For its activities, the WGSR works closely with the Cooperative

Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP) [Steering Body](#) and the [Working Group on Effects](#) (WGE). Also subsidiary bodies under the Convention, EMEP and WGE provide for scientific support to the Convention. They receive reports from several Task Forces, centres and International Cooperative Programmes (ICPs).

Established in 1997, the Implementation Committee assists Parties in complying with their obligations under the Convention. It monitors and facilitates, promotes, and aims to secure the implementation of and compliance with the obligations under the five most recent Protocols under the Convention.

Secretariat

The Secretariat is established through [Article 11](#) of the Convention. The Executive Secretary of UNECE carries out secretariat functions for all sessions of the Executive Body, i.e. convening and preparing these sessions, transmitting reports and information to the Parties and discharging the functions assigned to it by the Executive Body.

Financial mechanism and technical assistance

The Convention does not establish a financial mechanism. But, under [Article 3](#) of the Protocol on Long-term Financing of EMEP, the Parties, who have ratified this Protocol, are required to provide mandatory contributions on an annual basis. Additional activities are funded through voluntary contributions by Parties and donors.

The secretariat provides technical support and capacity building to countries in the Eastern region. It supports countries in developing and improving national emission inventories, in benchmarking national legislation against the requirements in the Convention and its protocols, and in awareness raising and capacity building on specific air pollution topics, such as Best Available Techniques. The secretariat has also developed e-learning courses on the Convention and its protocols (in [English](#) and [Russian](#)) and on emission inventory development (in [English](#) and [Russian](#)).

Implementation and compliance

Under the Convention and its Protocols and as last specified in Executive Body [Decision 2022/2](#), the Parties are reporting emission data on an annual basis. The data submitted is reviewed by the [Centre on Emission Inventories and Projections \(CEIP\)](#) of EMEP.

Protocols

Protocol to the Air Convention to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (Gothenburg Protocol)

The overall objective of the Protocol is to control and reduce emissions of sulphur, nitrogen oxides, ammonia and volatile organic compounds and particulate matter that are caused by anthropogenic activities and are likely to cause adverse effects on human health, natural ecosystems, materials and crops, due to acidification, eutrophication or ground-level ozone as a result of long-range

transboundary atmospheric transport. The Protocol entered into force on 17 May 2005 and has 32 Parties as of May 2025, whereas 31 Parties have ratified the 2012 amendments to the Gothenburg Protocol.

The Parties have quantified emission reduction commitments for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, ammonia, VOCs - and PM2.5 under the 2012 amendments - and set timescales for their reduction. The Protocol sets basic obligations for its Parties, including reducing and maintaining the reduction in its regulated annual emissions (Article 3), exchange of information and technology (Article 4), raising public awareness (Article 5), adoption of national strategies, policies and programmes and taking measures (Article 6), encouraging research, development, monitoring and cooperation (Article 8).

The Parties report their emissions under the Gothenburg Protocol to the Executive Body of the Convention on a periodic basis (Article 7) and submit annual national emission inventories in accordance with the Guidelines for Reporting Emissions and Projections Data under the Air Convention.

More information on the Protocol is available [here](#).

Protocol to the Air Convention on Heavy Metals (Aarhus Protocol)

The objective of the Protocol is to control emissions of heavy metals caused by anthropogenic activities that are subject to long-range transboundary atmospheric transport and are likely to have significant adverse effects on human health or the environment (Article 2). It aims to cut emissions from industrial sources (iron and steel industry, non-ferrous metal industry), combustion processes (power generation, road transport) and waste incineration. This Protocol entered into force on 29 December 2003 and has 35 Parties as of May 2025, whereas 27 Parties have ratified the 2012 amendments.

The Protocol lays down stringent limit values for emissions from stationary sources and suggests best available techniques (BAT) for these sources, such as special filters or scrubbers for combustion sources or mercury-free processes. In addition, the Protocol requires Parties to phase out leaded petrol. It also introduces measures to lower heavy metal emissions from other products, such as mercury in batteries, and proposes the introduction of management measures for other mercury-containing products, such as electrical components (thermostats, switches), measuring devices (thermometers, manometers, barometers), fluorescent lamps, dental amalgam, pesticides and paint.

The Parties report information on the levels of emissions of the heavy metals (cadmium, lead, mercury) listed in Annex I to the Executive Body of the Convention on a periodic basis (Article 7). The Parties submit annual national emission inventories in accordance with the Guidelines for Reporting Emissions and Projections Data under the Air Convention.

More information on the Protocol is available [here](#).

Protocol to the Air Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) (Aarhus Protocol on POPs)

The overarching objective of the Protocol is to control, reduce or eliminate discharges, emissions and losses of POPs. The Protocol outright bans the production and use of some products (aldrin,

chlordane, chlordecone, dieldrin, endrin, hexabromobiphenyl, mirex and toxaphene). Others are scheduled for elimination at a later stage (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), heptachlor, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and hexachlorobenzene). The Aarhus Protocol on POPs entered into force on 23 October 2003 and has 34 Parties as of May 2025, whereas 25 to 26 Parties have ratified the 2009 amendments respectively.

Article 3 of the Protocol sets basic obligations for the Parties on elimination of the production and use of the substances listed in Annex I, their disposal and transboundary movement, and on the restriction of the substances listed in Annex II. The Protocol also regulates the issues of exchange of information and technology (Article 5), raising public awareness (Article 6), adoption of national strategies, policies and programmes and taking measures (Article 7), encouraging research, development, monitoring and cooperation (Article 8).

The Parties report their emissions of POPs to the Executive Body of the Convention on a periodic basis (Article 9). The Parties submit annual national emission inventories in accordance with the Guidelines for Reporting Emissions and Projections Data under the Air Convention.

More information on the Protocol is available [here](#).

In 2001, the [Stockholm Convention on POPs](#) was adopted, building on the Aarhus Protocol to take action on POPs at the international level.

Protocol to the Air Convention on Further Reduction of Sulphur Emissions (Oslo Protocol)

The Protocol supplements the 1985 Helsinki Protocol on the Reduction of Sulphur Emissions (see below), and it sets emission ceilings until 2010 and beyond. This Protocol entered into force on 5 August 1998 and has 29 Parties as of May 2025.

More current targets for sulphur emissions are set in the Gothenburg Protocol (see above).

More information on the Protocol is available [here](#).

Protocol to the Air Convention concerning the Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds or their Transboundary Fluxes (Geneva Protocol)

The Protocol was developed to control and reduce emissions of VOCs due to their role in the formation of ground-level ozone. This Protocol entered into force on 2 February 1998 and has 24 Parties as of May 2025.

More current targets for these pollutants are set in the Gothenburg Protocol (see above).

More information on the Protocol is available [here](#).

Protocol to the Air Convention concerning the Control of Nitrogen Oxides or their Transboundary Fluxes (Sofia Protocol)

This Protocol was developed to control or reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides. The Protocol entered into force on 14 February 1991 and has 35 Parties as of May 2025.

The overarching objective of the Protocol is to control and/or reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides or their transboundary fluxes. Parties shall take effective measures. More current targets for these pollutants are set in the Gothenburg Protocol (see above).

More information on the Protocol is available [here](#).

Protocol to the Air Convention on the Reduction of Sulphur Emissions or their Transboundary Fluxes by at least 30 % (Helsinki Protocol)

This Protocol was developed to reduce sulphur emissions, which contribute to air pollution, acidification of the environment, and human health issues. The Protocol entered into force on 2 September 1987 and includes 25 Parties as of May 2025. The overarching objective of the Protocol is to provide for a 30 % reduction in sulphur emissions or their transboundary fluxes by the Protocol's Parties by 1993. More current targets for these pollutants are set in the Gothenburg Protocol (see above).

More information on the Protocol is available [here](#).

Protocol to the Air Convention on Long-term Financing of the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP Protocol)

This Protocol is an instrument for international cost-sharing on EMEP as a science-based programme on transboundary air pollution to inform policymaking. The Protocol entered into force on 28 January 1988 and has 46 Parties as of May 2025.

The EMEP programme has three main components: collection of emission data for air pollutants; measurement of air and precipitation quality; and modeling of atmospheric dispersion. Currently, more than 200 monitoring stations in 40 UNECE countries participate in the programme.²

Parties to the Protocol are required to cover the annual costs of the international centers cooperating within EMEP for the activities appearing in the work programme of the Steering Body of EMEP (Articles 2, 3).

Data on the status of relevant contributions is reported annually by the Secretariat to the Executive Body of the Air Convention.

More information on the Protocol is available [here](#).

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² See at <https://unece.org/environment-policy/air/emep-protocol>.

2. Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)



The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was adopted on 25 June 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus at the Fourth Ministerial Conference in the “Environment for Europe” process. Together with its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs), it protects every person’s right to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being, including the right to clean air. They are the only legally binding global instruments on environmental democracy that put Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development into practice.

- Entered into force on 30 October 2001.
- 48 Parties to the Convention (as of May 2025).

The Convention establishes Parties’ obligations to guarantee:

- a) public access to information by ensuring that public authorities collect, provide access to upon request ([article 4](#)) and disseminate environmental information ([article 5](#)) to the public routinely and in case of threats to human health and the environment. This information includes, inter alia, any information on the state of the environment, including air and atmosphere, and factors affecting or likely to affect the environment such as chemicals and waste;
- b) public participation in decision-making on activities that may have significant effect on the environment ([article 6 and Annex I](#), including within environmental impact assessment and permitting procedures) and during the preparation of plans, programmes, policies ([article 7](#)) and legislation ([article 8](#)) relating to the environment, including air quality, chemicals and waste management and pollution matters;
- c) public access to review procedures ([article 9](#)) relating to information requests, decisions, acts and omissions subject to public participation procedures or contravening national law relating to the environment, including with regard to air quality, chemicals and waste management and pollution matters;
- d) protection of members of the public exercising their rights in conformity with the Convention against penalization, persecuted or harassed in any way for their involvement ([article 3 \(8\)](#));
- e) promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international environmental decision-making process or within frameworks of international

organizations, including those dealing with air quality, chemical and wastes management and pollution matters ([article 3 \(7\)](#)).

Governance structure

The Meeting of the Parties is the main governing body of the Convention. It comprises all [Parties to the Convention](#). In its sessions, Signatories and other States as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders participate as observers. The mandate of the Meeting of the Parties is to keep under continuous review the implementation of the Convention and take the necessary measures required to achieve the purposes of the Convention. The Meeting of the Parties holds its regular sessions every fourth year. The [Working Group of the Parties](#) has been established to oversee the implementation of the work programme for the Convention between the sessions of the Meeting of the Parties. It has the same composition as the Meeting of the Parties and meets annually.

Secretariat

The Secretariat is established through [Article 12](#) of the Convention. The Executive Secretary of the UNECE carries out secretariat functions, which include:

- The convening and preparing the sessions of the Meeting of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies;
- The transmission to the Parties of reports and other information received in accordance with the provisions of this Convention;
- other functions as may be determined by the Parties.

Implementation and compliance

In accordance with article 10 (2) of the Convention, Parties to the Aarhus Convention [are regularly reporting](#) on the status of national implementation of the treaty in advance of the ordinary sessions of the Meeting of the Parties. In accordance with [Article 15](#) of the Convention, the Meeting of the Parties established the [Compliance Committee](#). The Meeting of the Parties, at its sessions, address issues of compliance, on the basis of the Committee's reports. At the Committee's recommendation, the Meeting of the Parties adopts decisions on general issues of compliance and also decisions on compliance by individual Parties.

The compliance mechanism may be triggered in the following ways:

1. A Party may make a [submission about compliance by another Party](#);
2. A Party may make a [submission concerning its own compliance](#);
3. Members of the public may make [communications](#) concerning a Party's compliance with the Convention;
4. The secretariat may make a [referral](#) to the Committee;
5. The [Meeting of the Parties may request the Committee](#) to review the compliance by the Party concerned;

6. The Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders may make a referral to the Committee concerning a Party's compliance with article 3 (8) of the Convention;
7. A Party may request the Committee for [advice and assistance](#).

In addition, the Committee may examine compliance issues on its own initiative and make recommendations; prepare reports on compliance with or implementation of the provisions of the Convention at the request of the Meeting of the Parties; and monitor, assess and facilitate the implementation of and compliance with the reporting requirements under [Article 10 \(2\)](#) of the Convention.

A [Rapid Response Mechanism for the Protection of Environmental Defenders](#) was established through decision VII/9 adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its seventh session (Geneva, 21 October 2021). This is the first such mechanism specifically safeguarding environmental defenders established within a legally binding framework either under the United Nations system or other intergovernmental structure. The decision provided the mandate for the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders to take measures to protect any person who is either:

- a) Experiencing persecution, penalization or harassment;
- b) At imminent threat of persecution, penalization or harassment in any way, for seeking to exercise their rights under the Aarhus Convention.

The Special Rapporteur has various tools for resolving complaints and protecting environmental defenders quickly and effectively, which may include issuing immediate and ongoing protection measures, using diplomatic channels, issuing public statements, or bringing the matter to the attention of other relevant human rights bodies, and of the concerned Governments and Heads of State. Protection measures are tailored to each situation; this could mean that the measure will list several actions that the Party concerned is directed to take to ensure that environmental defenders are not subject to further persecution, penalization and harassment. The Special Rapporteur also takes a proactive role in raising awareness of environmental defenders' rights under the Aarhus Convention and cooperates with other relevant human rights bodies and organizations.

Relevant Amendments

GMO Amendment

[The only amendment to the Aarhus Convention](#) concerns public participation in decisions regarding the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) into the environment and their placement on the market. The GMO Amendment [entered into force on 20 April 2025](#).

Financial arrangements

The Meeting of the Parties to the Convention established financial arrangements to support the implementation of the work programmes. Currently, activities under the Convention's Work Programme are funded through voluntary contributions by Parties.

Capacity building

A number of multilateral capacity-building activities are carried out under the treaty, including thematic Task Forces, global roundtables on specific topics and networking of judiciary, judicial training institutions and other independent review bodies in the pan-European region. These activities provide a platform for Governments and stakeholders to share experiences and undertake peer-learning to advance the Convention's implementation. Technical assistance to countries with economies in transition and developing countries to advance the treaty's implementation at national and subnational level is mainly provided by partner organizations. UNECE collaborates with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, and the European Union and other partner organizations to deliver targeted support for countries in Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

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Annex: List of Aarhus Centres in Central Asia

As of 2025, the OSCE supports over 60 Aarhus Centres across 14 countries in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and South Caucasus. These Centres serve as platforms for dialogue between the public, governments, and the private sector, addressing environmental challenges and promoting transparency and accountability in environmental governance. The list of Aarhus Centres is available [here](#).

Kazakhstan	
National Aarhus Centre of Kazakhstan	The National Aarhus Centre of Kazakhstan promotes public participation in decision-making processes through access to information and justice in environmental matters. The main areas of work are: • Promotion of the Kazakhstani Aarhus Centres networking; • Promotion of the ratification of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers; • Establishment of the national Register.
Aarhus Centre Aktobe	The Aarhus Centre Aktobe's goal is to improve access to information regarding environmental information and to ensure public participation in the decision making process. The Centre's main fields of activity include: • Participation in the dialogue platforms to promote efficient water resources and land management, mitigation of climate change, municipal waste utilization and green economy issues; • Support, in the field of environmental impact assessment, of analysis of the potential influence of a certain activity on the environment; • Facilitation of consultations with the concerned parties, both international and national, seeking to reach agreeable solutions; • Environmental monitoring.
Aarhus Centre Almaty	The Aarhus Centre promotes the access to information, justice and public participation in decision-making process on environmental matters in the city of Almaty and the Almaty region.

	The main activities include: • Dissemination of information on environmental issues; • Delivery of trainings, seminars and lectures to increase awareness of environmental issues; • Promotion of education and advocacy in environmental issues.
Aarhus Centre Karaganda	The Karaganda Aarhus Centre contributes to the environmentally safe and sustainable development of the Karaganda region and Kazakhstan. The activities developed seek to enhance the capacity of NHOs and to facilitate the better co-operation of national and regional authorities, civil society representatives, private sector and ordinary citizens on a wide range of environmental security issues.
Aarhus Centre of Kyzylorda	The Aarhus Centre Kyzylorda raises public awareness on access to justice in the field of environmental protection and organises several events to engage with different stakeholders. The Centre is involved in: • Organizing lectures, seminars, forums, roundtables and public hearings for representatives of executive bodies, public associations, individuals and legal entities on green economy, environmental protection and regarding the provisions of the Aarhus Convention; • Conducting training courses on environmental protection and green economy.
Aarhus Centre Kokshetau	The mission of the Kokshetau Aarhus Centre is to promote the implementation of the three pillars of the Aarhus Convention in the Akmola Province of Kazakhstan. The scope of the Centre's activities include: • Awareness-raising and education in the issues of environment protection and green growth; • Promotion of access to justice / courts in environmental matters; • Promotion of access to the information on environmental protection;

	• Encouraging public participation in environmental decision-making; • Promotion of the regional development program aiming at efficient implementation of the Aarhus Convention.
Aarhus Centre Pavlodar	The Pavlodar Aarhus Centre focuses on the protection of citizens rights for a healthy environment.
Aarhus Centre Petropavlovsk	The Northern Kazakhstan Aarhus Centre focuses on water management issues in the Northern part of Kazakhstan.
Aarhus Centre Uralsk	The Uralsk Aarhus Centre promotes public participation in decision-making processes through providing access to information and justice in environmental matters. The Centre focuses in its activities on green economy, waste and water management issues.
Kyrgyz Republic	
Aarhus Centre Bishkek	The Aarhus Centre Bishkek ensures public access to information and the decision-making system, in order to ensure the rights of citizens to a healthy environment. The scope of action of the centre covers the North of Kyrgyzstan (4 provinces and the capital of the country). The staff consists of a manager, a finance administrative assistant and an information assistant.
Aarhus Centre Osh	The Aarhus Centre in Osh focuses on four major areas: • awareness-raising in regards to the Aarhus Convention; • improving the youth's environmental awareness and its involvement in environmental protection activities; • promoting environmental journalism; • fostering dialogue between the government and civil society on environmental issues. The structure of the Centre consists of: a Consultative Board, a Supervisory Board, a manager, an administrative-finance assistant and a communications specialist.
Aarhus Centre Issyk-Kul	The Aarhus Centre in Issyk-Kul was established in 2017 and is mainly involved in: • Good environmental governance; • Environmental legislation; • Access to environmental information.

Aarhus Centre Naryn	The Aarhus Centre in Naryn opened in 2019 and is hosted by the University of Central Asia. The Centre mainly deals with environmental legislation and access to justice in environmental matters, youth empowerment, public awareness and sustainable development.
Tajikistan	
Aarhus Centre Dushanbe	The main task of Dushanbe Aarhus Centre is to facilitate partnership among government and civil society in addressing priority environmental and security challenges in the region through utilization of the mechanisms offered by the Aarhus Centres. Geographical coverage of the Centre is Dushanbe city and the Districts of Republican Subordination.
Aarhus Centre Garm	The main task of Garm Aarhus Centre is to facilitate partnership among government and civil society in addressing priority environmental and security challenges in the region through utilization of the mechanisms offered by the Aarhus Centres.
Aarhus Centre Khorog	The main task of Aarhus Centre Khorog is to facilitate partnership among government and civil society in addressing priority environmental and security challenges in the region through utilization of the mechanisms offered by the Aarhus Centers. Khorog Aarhus Center covers the whole geographic territory of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of Tajikistan and transboundary areas of Afghan Badakhshan.
Aarhus Centre Khujand	The Aarhus Centre Khujand supports and promotes the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Khujand and the Sughd Province, in Northern Tajikistan. The activities are implemented within three program directions: • Green Patrol Program (this program is aimed at developing and strengthening the youth initiative groups in the field through training and practical involvement of young people in solving of socio-ecological problems); • Ecological Informational Aarhus Centre (the program works based on the 3 pillars of the Aarhus Convention, which has been ratified by the Republic of Tajikistan)

	Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation programs.
Aarhus Centre Bohtar (Kurgan-Tyube)	The main task of Bohtar (Kurgan-Tyube) Aarhus Centre is to facilitate partnership among government and civil society in addressing priority environmental and security challenges in the region through utilization of the mechanisms offered by the Aarhus Centres.
Turkmenistan	
Aarhus Centre Ashgabat	The Centre facilitates the free access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice on environmental matters. Apart from including free legal consultations related to environmental rights, the main activities of the Centre comprise: - Increasing the level of environmental knowledge of the public and other interested parties with focus on environmental norms and human rights, as well as creating an environmental information database, including national laws on the environment; - Producing comprehensive environmental materials to be published in the national mass media; - Developing partnerships with the corresponding state and civil society representatives, as well as with the network of Aarhus Centres in other OSCE countries; - Promoting the Aarhus Convention among relevant stakeholders; - Supporting the implementation of projects of international players, such as the OSCE, UNDP, UNEP, Tempus, World Bank, ADB, IDB and other stakeholders.

3. Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs)



The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) was adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, at its extraordinary session held in Kyiv from the 21st to the 23rd of May 2003. It is the only legally binding international instrument on pollutant release and transfer registers. Its objective is "to enhance public access to information through the establishment of coherent, nationwide pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs)."

PRTRs are inventories of pollution from industrial sites and other sources. Although regulating information on pollution, rather than pollution directly, the Protocol is expected to exert a significant downward pressure on levels of pollution, as no company will want to be identified as among the biggest polluters.

All United Nations Member States can join the Protocol, including those which have not ratified the Aarhus Convention and those which are not members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, making it by design an 'open' global treaty.

- Entered into force on 8 October 2009.
- 38 Parties to the Protocol.

Governance structure

The Meeting of the Parties is the main governing body of the Convention. It comprises all [Parties to the Protocol](#). In its sessions, Signatories and other States as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders participate as observers. The mandate of the Meeting of the Parties is to keep under continuous review the implementation of the Protocol and take the necessary measures required to achieve the purposes of the Protocol. The Meeting of the Parties holds its regular sessions every fourth year. The [Working Group of the Parties](#) has been established to oversee the implementation of the work programme for the Protocol between the sessions of the Meeting of the Parties. It has the same composition as the Meeting of the Parties and meets annually.

Secretariat

The Secretariat is established through [Article 21](#) of the Protocol. The Executive Secretary of the UNECE carries out secretariat functions, which include:

- The convening and preparing the sessions of the Meeting of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies;
- The transmission to the Parties of reports and other information received in accordance with the provisions of this Convention;
- The reporting to the Meeting of the Parties on the activities of the secretariat;
- Other functions as may be determined by the Parties.

Implementation and compliance

In accordance with the requirements of [Articles 4-10](#) of the Protocol, each Party is required to establish and update annually a structured, computerized and publicly accessible database of potentially harmful releases (emissions) to air, water and soil and report on them annually. The information for the database will be collected from reporting by owners or operators of facilities (point sources of pollution) which exceed the thresholds specified in annexes to the Protocol on PRTRs. The national reporting under the Protocol also covers available data on releases from diffuse sources, e.g. transport and agriculture.

Pollutants are defined by [Article 2](#), paragraph 6, of the Protocol on PRTRs as substances or a group of substances “that may be harmful to the environment or to human health on account of its properties and of its introduction into the environment.” The Protocol covers 86 pollutants, including carbon monoxide, nitrogen and sulphur oxides, particulate matter (PM), heavy metals, persistent organic pollutants, certain carcinogens such as dioxins, asbestos, as well as greenhouse gases (GHGs) and ozone-depleting substances. PRTRs enable members of the public to search for and identify point sources of 86 pollutants by facility, location, activity, owner or operator, and medium (air, water, land).

In accordance with article 17 (2) of the Protocol, Parties [are regularly reporting](#) on the status of national implementation of this treaty in advance of the ordinary sessions of the Meeting of the Parties.

In accordance with [Article 22](#) of the Protocol, the Meeting of the Parties established the [Compliance Committee](#). The Meeting of the Parties, at its sessions, addresses issues of compliance, on the basis of the Committee's reports. On the basis of the Committee's recommendation, the Meeting of the Parties can adopt decisions. The compliance mechanism may be triggered in the following ways:

1. A Party may make a submission about compliance by another Party;
2. A Party may make a submission concerning its own compliance;
3. The secretariat may make a referral to the Committee;

4. Members of the public may make [communications](#) concerning a Party's compliance;
5. The Meeting of the Parties may request the Committee to review the compliance by the Party concerned;
6. A Party may request the Committee for [advice and assistance](#).

In addition, the Committee [may examine compliance issues on its own initiative](#) and make recommendations; prepare reports on compliance with or implementation of the provisions of the Protocol at the request of the Meeting of the Parties; and monitor, assess and facilitate the implementation of and compliance with the reporting requirements under 17 (2) of the Protocol.

Financial arrangements

The Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol established financial arrangements to support the implementation of the work programmes. Currently, activities under the Protocol's work programme are funded through voluntary contributions by Parties.

Capacity building

[Global roundtables](#) on specific topics organized jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research are held regularly to promote establishment of PRTR systems, thereby furthering the implementation of the Protocol. These events provide a platform for governments and stakeholders to share experiences and undertake peer-learning. Technical assistance to countries with economies in transition and developing countries to advance the treaty's implementation at national and subnational level is mainly provided by partner organizations. UNECE collaborates with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, and the European Union and other partner organizations to deliver targeted support for countries in Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

Reporting Timeline

