

Pittsburgh, June 12, 1997

COUNCIL RESOLUTION 97-04

**Promoting Comparability of Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs)**

THE COUNCIL:

REAFFIRMING the importance of the objectives of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC);

DETERMINED to take action pursuant to Article 10(2)(a) of the NAAEC which provides that the Council may consider and develop recommendations regarding “comparability of techniques and methodologies for data gathering and analysis, data management and electronic data communications on matters covered by this Agreement”;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 which states, *inter alia*, that governments and relevant international organizations with the cooperation of industry should “improve databases and information systems on toxic chemicals” and that “the broadest possible awareness of chemical risks is a prerequisite for achieving chemical safety”;

ALSO TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Recommendation of the Council of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) of 20 February 1996 which states that “[m]ember countries should consider sharing periodically the results of the implementation of such systems among themselves and with non-member countries with particular emphasis upon sharing of data from border areas among relevant neighboring countries”, and that member countries in establishing PRTR systems should take into account the set of principles contained in the Annex to the OECD Recommendation, including that “PRTR systems should allow as far as possible comparison and cooperation with other national PRTR systems and possible harmonization with similar international databases”;

BUILDING UPON activities taken pursuant to existing agreements by focusing on the comparability of methodologies for data collection and analysis;

CONVINCED that PRTRs provide valuable information to assist in environmental risk reduction, environmental decision making and sound management of chemicals and allow for public access to environmental information;

AFFIRMING that a higher degree of data comparability is necessary for a more accurate representation of North American environmental quality;

RECOGNIZING that each national program has developed a unique process for the collection and modification of environmental data sets;

CONVINCED of the importance of reliable and relevant environmental data to assist the Parties and others in taking informed and responsible actions pursuant to Article 10(2)(a) of the NAAEC and other bilateral or multilateral agreements;

HEREBY:

AGREES to work toward adopting more comparable PRTRs;

FURTHER AGREES to produce an annual Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) report analyzing publicly available information from North American PRTRs which will be produced by 31 December of each year (analyzing data from two years prior) provided the CEC Secretariat receives the PRTR data by 1 April of each year;

DECIDES to collaborate in the development of an Internet site to present the matched subset of data from each of the three national PRTRs and provide information on the degree of comparability of the North American PRTRs and other information as agreed upon by the Council by June 1998;

AGREES to promote regional cooperation among the Parties to enhance PRTRs in North America, to improve the usefulness of the information by allowing better comparison and use of the data through focusing on the following PRTR issues:

- what is reported,
- who is required to report,
- reporting guidance, including:
  - definitions and nomenclature
  - data estimation techniques
- data dissemination and user support,
- information on releases from non-point sources, as mutually agreed upon, and
- other issues as mutually agreed upon.

DIRECTS the Secretariat to work with the Parties to implement the decisions and commitments set forth in this resolution, including:

- a) developing an implementation plan to enhance the comparability of North American PRTRs by 31 March 1998, including short-term and long-term goals;

- b) revising and assessing progress in enhancing the comparability of North American PRTRs annually, beginning 31 March 1998.
- c) developing recommendations to improve dissemination of PRTR data, including facilitation of user access to, and comprehension of, PRTR data and associated relevant information, as well as measures relating to joint approaches to technical cooperation and information sharing;
- d) noting which industrial sectors, within the matched subset of PRTR data, have significant differences in the amounts reported between the national PRTR programs, and examining possible reasons for these differences;
- e) developing recommendations for special focus reports to highlight areas that would benefit from further comparability, as may be agreed upon by the Council;
- f) encouraging complementary national approaches and timetables to enhance PRTRs in a manner that respects the different economic, political and regulatory circumstances of the Parties;
- g) encouraging and providing for meaningful public and governmental participation, including participation by non-governmental organizations, business and industry, provincial, state, and municipal governments, academia, and technical and policy experts in developing its recommendations for enhanced comparability; and
- h) coordinating activities, avoiding the duplication of effort, and where possible, using the expertise of existing workgroups and other organizations, e.g., UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research), OECD, and the *PRTR Coordination Group* (as recommended under *International Forum for Chemical Safety*).

APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL:

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