Informal translation

Intervention of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus to the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters on 15 September 2017 in Budva, Montenegro

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Chair of the meeting for the opportunity to speak.

Despite the fact that the Republic of Belarus is not a party to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs), it makes a significant contribution to international cooperation in its implementation, and in particular in the region of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

In 2011-2013 years the project of international technical assistance was implemented in the Republic of Belarus: "Increasing the capacity to develop national pollutant release and transfer registers in two countries with economies in transition: the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Tajikistan under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to justice in matters relating to the environment".

As a result of the project, the structure and database of the national PRTR were developed; the statistical reporting of enterprises on pollutant emissions with the purpose of using data to fill in the PRTR base has been studied and analyzed. It was found out that the existing reporting system of enterprises can be used to fill the PRTR database, which will be available to the public, and a list of enterprises meeting the requirements of the PRTR Protocol and a list of substances to be included in the PRTR database were identified.

The results of the project formed the basis for further development of PRTRs at the national and international levels. The project was carried out in cooperation with Tajikistan and marked by a certificate from UNEP. The experience of cooperation at the regional level can be used by other EECCA countries.

In November 2011, the Republic of Belarus, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the UNECE, organized the first subregional workshop on the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for EECCA countries, which discussed the prospects for further cooperation under the PRTR Protocol in the EECCA region.

The logical continuation of the first subregional workshop was the organization of the Second Subregional Workshop on the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for EECCA countries, held in the Republic of Belarus, in Minsk, on 19-21 September 2016, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the UNECE Convention on Transboundary Pollution long-range air and its protocols with a view to promoting access and implementation of the Protocol.

I would like to inform the Meeting of the Parties about this workshop in more detail.

The workshop was attended by the delegations of the Parties to the Protocol, the countries that signed the Protocol and EECCA delegations that didn’t sign the Protocol, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations.

The workshop discussed, inter alia, the principles for the development of national pollutant release and transfer registers, the development of PRTRs in the EECCA region, the institutional and regulatory framework, capacity building for data use and public information; activities, substances, emissions; The Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and its
protocols are mutual assistance in data collection and reporting between emission inventories and PRTRs; the best practice of introducing PRTRs, addressing problematic issues and creating ways to achieve progress.

This was the first workshop where experts who work with national PRTR reporting and the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution were given the opportunity to share their experiences.

When implementing the reporting system, it is very important that this work is preceded by a comprehensive inventory of international agreements and laws to determine the existing joint requirements set out in the documents. It was necessary to do this in order to determine where there is synergy, and to avoid such separate systems developed in parallel at the national level. An integrated approach is more cost-effective for both the state and operators.

At all sessions of the workshop, participants shared knowledge, experience and discussed solutions to existing gaps in the implementation and use of PRTRs. One session was devoted to the Protocol in the context of other international processes. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) shared information on the conventions of the United Nations Environment Program (Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Mercury Convention), which are clearly linked to PRTRs. UNITAR also demonstrated a set of tools of the International Organizations for Medical Cooperation, which can be used to determine appropriate and effective national actions to implement PRTRs. The International Coordinating Group PRTR and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development provided links to very useful documents and websites.

The workshop provided a platform for setting priorities for the further development and improvement of PRTR implementation in the EECCA region, taking into account the experience of the European Union countries that are Parties to the Protocol (Sweden, Belgium, Spain, Germany and Norway). The workshop resulted in conclusions on how to improve and facilitate public access to environmental information through the National PRTR database.

The main obstacles or difficulties in the EECCA countries are: limited financial resources; lack of qualified personnel; the industry's reluctance to provide emission data.

High quality of presentation materials and active participation was achieved: 11 out of 12 countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia addressed the meeting.

Key issues, needs and solutions for thematic sessions were identified, which are the main aspects relevant to the implementation of the PRTR Protocol. These results provided the basis for identifying priority areas for future work on PRTR development, capacity-building activities and bilateral programs. The results can be used by the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and international organizations such as ECE, GEF, OECD, UNITAR and UNEP in order to inform about current and planned capacity building activities.

The project of international technical assistance was also implemented in the Republic of Belarus: "Development and implementation of the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register in the Grodno Oblast of the Republic of Belarus" with the financial support of the Zoi Ecological Network (Geneva, Switzerland) in 2014-2016.

During the project implementation, the analysis of European and world experience of PRTR implementation was conducted, a database and WEB interface was developed (http://prtr.ecoinfo.by). An information video on the importance of access to the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) in the Grodno region of the Republic of Belarus for members of the public was developed (https://vimeo.com/203071900). A sociological study was conducted to find
out the effectiveness of informing the public about pollutant emissions by industrial enterprises using the publicly accessible PRTR website on the Internet.

Thus, as a result of the project, the site of the PRTR of the Grodno region has been developed, accessible to the public, the coverage of which in the future is planned to be extended to other regions of the Republic of Belarus. A lot of work was done with enterprises to provide data to fill in the PRTR database. The project was a step towards the development of a national PRTR.

Currently, the Republic of Belarus participates in the implementation of "The Global Project on the Implementation of the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) as a tool for reporting and reporting on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and raising awareness in Belarus, Cambodia, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Peru" together with UNITAR.

As part of the project, the National Coordination Group and the National Coordination Committee were established. The National Seminar was held. It presented and discussed information on the content of the project and its implementation plan, as well as the current situation on the development of PRTRs. The participating stakeholders discussed and agreed on the tasks of the national PRTR and how to achieve them. The workshop was the official presentation of the project at the country level, as well as the submission and endorsement of the National Coordination Group and the National Coordination Committee.

Further project activities include, inter alia, the development of a draft national plan for the further implementation of the PRTR, a national strategy for public access to environmental information and draft legal documentation for accession to the Protocol on PRTRs.

In conclusion, I would like to note the following:
- Considerable work has been done in the Republic of Belarus to develop and implement PRTRs at the national level (a database and WEB interface of the national PRTR has been developed).
- The Republic of Belarus takes an active part in international cooperation under the Protocol on PRTRs (two workshops were held in cooperation with UNECE and a number of international projects were implemented).
- The establishment and operation of a national PRTR is the implementation of Article 5, paragraph 9, of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.
- To successfully implement the PRTR at the national level and to accede to the Protocol on PRTRs, it is necessary to develop a legal framework for PRTRs, further improve the technical aspects of the national PRTR, as well as close cooperation with enterprises that provide information to fill in the PRTR database.
- Implementation of the Global Project on the Implementation of the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) will provide an opportunity for further implementation of the National PRTR.

I also wanted to thank the UNECE Secretariat, UNEP, UNITAR and the ZOI Environmental Network for their help and financial support.