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Organised by The secretariat of the UNECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and The secretariat of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and its protocols (Air Convention) in cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus

Report on the Second Subregional Workshop on the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia – “Get Your Right to a Healthy Community” held in Minsk, on 19-21 September 2016¹

Summary

Belarus has played a proactive role in the implementation of the Protocol and organized the first subregional workshop as to promote the Protocol in the country and in the EECCA subregion in November 2011.

The Second Subregional Workshop on the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus. Representatives of NGOs, industry and international governmental organizations were also involved in the event.

The workshop provided an opportunity to demonstrate to the delegates and experts from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia the synergies, in particular related to data collection and reporting, between the Protocol on PRTRs and the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Convention and its protocols in order to encourage the accession to the Protocol and its implementation.

¹ Informal unedited document prepared by RUE "Bel SRC "Ecology".

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
	Introduction	
	A. Attendance	
	B. Proceedings	
I	First Session: Setting the scene - Introduction to development of national Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.....	
II	Second Session: Sharing views on the current status and challenges for PRTR development in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (tour de table)	
III	Third Session: The institutional and regulatory framework for data collection, dissemination and access to information	
IV	Fourth Session: PRTR data quality and management	
V	Fifth Session: Access to data and its dissemination data presentation, including capacity building for data usage and public awareness	
VI	Sixth Session: Scope of the Protocol: Activities, substances, releases	
VII	Seventh Session: The Protocol in the context of other international processes	
VIII	Eight Session: UNECE Air Convention and its protocols - Synergies on data collection and reporting between emission inventories and PRTR	
IX	Ninth Session (bilaterals): Best practices in PRTR implementation - addressing problematic areas and creating pathways for progress.....	
X	Major conclusions	
XI	Closing statements.....	

Introduction

1. The secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and the secretariat of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and its protocols (Air Convention), in cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of the Republic of Belarus, organized a Second Subregional Workshop to provide an opportunity to demonstrate to the delegation and experts from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia the synergies, in particular related to data collection and reporting, between the Protocol on PRTRs and the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Convention and its protocols in order to encourage the accession to the Protocol and its implementation.

A. Attendance

2. The workshop was attended by delegations from the following Parties to the Protocol: Sweden, Belgium, Spain, European Union (EU), Moldova, Germany and Norway.

3. The workshop was attended by delegations from the following Signatories to the Protocol: Armenia, Georgia, Poland, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

4. Delegations from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan were also present.

5. The representatives of the following international organizations attended the Workshop: the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Also present was the Graduate Institute of International and The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC). The following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were represented: Khazer NGO (Armenia); ECOSCOPE (Azerbaijan); Group of Environmental Protection, AQUAMEDIA (Georgia); EcoMuseum Kazakstan (Kazakhstan); EcoContact (Moldova); Foundation to support civil initiatives (Tajikistan); European ECO Forum.

6. In addition, representative of the Aarhus Centre of Belarus also attended.

B. Proceedings

7. The workshop was organized in the following ten thematic sessions: (1) Setting the scene - Introduction to development of national Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers; (2) Sharing views on the current status and challenges for PRTR development in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia; (3) The institutional and regulatory framework for data collection, dissemination and access to information; (4) PRTR data quality and management; (5) Access to data and its dissemination data presentation, including capacity building for data usage and public awareness; (6) Scope of the Protocol: Activities, substances, releases; (7) The Protocol in the context of other international processes; (8) UNECE Air Convention and its protocols - Synergies on data collection and reporting between emission inventories and PRTR; (9) Best practices in PRTR implementation - addressing problematic areas and creating pathways for progress; (10) Summary remarks by the Chair and closing statement by the host.

Outcomes

1. Different authorities with political and technical responsibilities, as well as representatives of civil society and PRTR experts from participating countries share experience and knowledge, learn from each other and discussed in details the solutions to existing deficiencies in relation to the implementation and use of PRTRs.
2. Through a range of specific thematic sessions , participants discussed and found out the best ways to develop and implement PRTRs at the national level as regards: a) creating the appropriate institutional and legal frameworks; b) developing the list of chemical substances and enterprises to be covered; c) developing reporting requirements; d) managing data and its dissemination; e) foreseeing capacity building needs; and f) promoting public awareness.
3. The participants had the excellent opportunity to share experiences gained through implementing PRTRs in different countries and learn how better to deal with the implementation of PRTRs in their own countries and to use synergies with other instruments, such as the Air Convention and its protocols.

4. The Workshop was a platform for definition of priorities for further development and improvement of the implementation of the PRTR in the EECCA region taken into account the experience of the European Union countries which are the Parties to the Protocol (Sweden, Belgium, Spain, Germany and Norway).
5. Two countries from EECCA region (Moldova and Ukraine) which are also Parties to Protocol presented the result and some practical recommendations how the national PRTR is functioning in their countries, including its administrative and legal aspects.
6. The main outcome of the Workshop was the discussion and conclusions how to improve and facilitate the access of the public to environmental information by means of the data base of the National PRTR.
7. The main obstacles or difficulties existing in EECCA countries are: financial resources: lack of the qualified personal; reluctance of the industry to provide emission data.