I. Objectives

1. The workshop will be organized by the secretariat of 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), the secretariat of the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) in cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus and its scientific and research center RUE “Bel SRC “Ecology”.

2. The three-day event aims to promote the implementation and ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs, also through explaining the synergies with the Air Convention and its protocols in data collecting and reporting. It is expected that relevant authorities with political and technical responsibilities, as well as representatives of civil society and PRTR experts from participating countries would share knowledge, learn from each other and discuss solutions to existing deficiencies in relation to the implementation and use of PRTRs.

3. Through a range of specific thematic sessions, participants will find out how better to deal with the implementation of 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.
4. The participants will have 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.

II. Background


6. The Protocol is the only legally binding international instrument on pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs). Its objective is to enhance public access to information through the establishment of coherent, nationwide PRTRs.

7. A PRTR is a national or regional environmental database or inventory of potentially hazardous chemical substances and/or pollutants released to air, water and soil and transferred off-site for treatment or disposal. PRTRs implementation includes, but is not limited to the following:

- The industrial or business facilities quantify and report the amounts of substances released to each environmental medium (air, water, and soil) or transferred off-site for waste management or wastewater treatment.

- An estimation of releases from diffuse sources, such as agriculture and transport and from the end use of products, usually compiled by environmental authorities, is also included.

8. The Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs, at its second session (Maastricht, 2-4 July 2014), encouraged Signatories and other interested States to proceed with accession to the Protocol and called upon Governments to strengthen cooperation between experts dealing with the Protocol on PRTRs and those dealing with the Air Convention, as well as experts involved in projects carried out by international organizations, so as to ensure coordination at the national level. Furthermore, the Protocol’s Work Programme for 2015-2017 foresees technical assistance activities such as subregional workshops designed to respond to the needs of the countries concerned as to assist them in the effective implementation of the Protocol.

9. Currently, only five out of thirty eight Signatories are countries of the subregion of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and only the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are Parties to the Protocol. Belarus has played a proactive role in the implementation of the Protocol and co-organized the first subregional workshop in November 2011 as to promote the Protocol in the country and in the subregion.

III. Provisional programme

10. The Workshop will include presentations made by experts, open discussion among participants and the preparation of conclusions and recommendations. Different aspects relevant for the implementation of PRTR system will be addressed within the following sessions:

- Session 1: Setting the scene - Introduction to development of national Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers
- Session 2: Tour de table: Sharing views on the current status and challenges for PRTR development in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia
- Session 3: The institutional and regulatory framework for data collection, dissemination and access to information
- Session 4: PRTR data quality and management
- Session 5: Access to data and its dissemination data presentation, including capacity building for data usage and public awareness
- Session 6: Scope of the Protocol: Activities, substances, releases
- Session 7: The Protocol in the context of other international processes
- Session 8: UNECE Air Convention and its protocols - Air quality and pollution from large point sources with a focus on data collection and reporting under the two instruments
- Session 9: Best practices in PRTR implementation - addressing problematic areas and creating pathways for progress

A more detailed programme will be provided prior to commencement of the workshop.

IV. Background documentation and workshop outputs

11. Participants are asked to please familiarize themselves with the following background materials available on the UNECE website:

- Protocol on PRTRs introduction
  http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.htm

- Guidance on Implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers
  http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.guidancedev.htm

- Additional background material for the workshop will be made available on the UNECE website at: http://live.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.cb.html. Participants are welcome to make available additional relevant material for the workshop and should email such material to the host country (Belarus), email: melekhdima@gmail.com with a copy to the UNECE secretariat at prtr.survey@unece.org.

12. The participants will learn how PRTRs are implemented in other countries, what challenges are ahead and will discuss and reflect about their own challenges and needs so that they can get support from experts and colleagues in finding possible ways to deal with implementing PRTRs in their countries. They will prepare a set of conclusions and will be encouraged to continue networking and acquiring profit from available resources in order to implement PRTRs and ratify or accede to the Protocol.

13. The main outputs of the Workshop will include background materials and presentations, the report, containing conclusions, and a questionnaire evaluating the workshop. The outcomes of the workshop will provide a ground for identifying priority needs for future work in the countries concerned.
V. Practical information

1. Working hours, languages of the meeting

14. Working languages of the meeting will be English and Russian.

15. The Workshop will start at 9.30 a.m. on 19 September 2016 and end at 6.00 pm on 21 September 2016. The Workshop will be conducted in English and Russian.

16. Refreshments during short breaks at the morning and afternoon sessions will be provided free of charge for participants on 19-21 September 2016. Reception will also be organized for all participants on 19 September at 6.30 pm.

2. Meeting venue

17. The workshop will take place in Minsk, Belarus, at the following location: IBB Hotel, 11, Gazeta Pravda ave, 220116 Minsk, Belarus. Phone: +375 17 270-59-59, +375 17 270-39-94. Single rooms are booked for each participant (unless requested otherwise). Lunch and dinner will be provided during the meeting free of charge for the participants. Participants bear the cost of additional services they may request.

3. Registration

18. Each participant should complete a registration form (see annex) and send it to the RUE “Bel SRC “ECOLOGY”: Mr. Dima Melekh at melekhdima@gmail.com with a copy to the UNECE secretariat at prtr.survey@unece.org as soon as possible, but not later than 15 August 2016.

4. Financial assistance

19. Limited funds are available to assist participants from countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, whose work has a direct relevance to the workshop. Priority will be given to: (a) PRTR and air pollution policy making and technical experts from the countries’ authorities and (b) NGOs involved in the work related to PRTRs.

20. For participants eligible to receive financial support, organisers will cover costs for accommodation (by direct payment to the hotel) and travel. Participants should buy their own tickets to and from Minsk at the cheapest rate possible. Prior to buying a ticket they should send the itinerary and price to the host country secretariat for approval (melekhdima@gmail.com). Only when the itinerary and price of the ticket are approved, participants can buy tickets. The cost of the tickets, as approved by the host country and the ECE secretariat, will be reimbursed in Minsk at the meeting in USD. The following documents are required for the reimbursement: copy of your passport; copy of your ticket; original of the boarding pass to Minsk. In addition, the eligible participants will receive some miscellaneous cash in USD to help them to cover any other expenses associated with their participation in the workshop.

21. Requests for financial support should be indicated clearly in the registration form and be accompanied by a short description of the applicant’s background stating the relevance of their experience or future activities to the theme of the workshop. Please make sure that the registration form and the accompanying information is sent to Mr. Dima Melekh at
5. **Travel arrangements**

22. The host country is planning to provide a shuttle service for participants from the airport to hotels for all participants. More detailed information regarding the shuttle service will be provided to participants at a later stage.

6. **Accommodation**

23. The organizers will make a block booking for the hotel and will make the hotel payment for eligible participants. In this regard, further detailed information will be sent to participants at a later stage. Please note that the organizers will cover up to 4 nights stay in the hotel between 18-21 September 2016, except for those who live close to Minsk. Those participants who are not eligible to receive financial support for accommodation may ask the organizers for assistance in reserving hotels.

24. All participants should pay for any additional charges (laundry, room service, bar bills, telephone calls etc.) directly to the management of the hotel.

7. **Visas**

25. A visa is not required for entry into Belarus for citizens of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Only nationals from Turkmenistan and experts from Western Europe and North America will need a visa. Please indicate clearly in the registration form if you require a letter of invitation for visa purpose.

8. **Currency and money**

26. The currency in Belarus is the Belarusian Ruble. The currency code for Rubles is BYR. Up-to-date exchange rates are available at http://coinmill.com/BYR_MKD.html. If needed you can buy local currency at exchange desks in the airport. Currency exchange is also available at currency exchange offices at the hotel and around the city.

9. **Insurance**

27. Please make sure that you have adequate individual health, accident and travel risk insurance cover, as these will not be provided by the organisers.

10. **Further information and contacts**

28. Should you have any queries regarding practical arrangements, hotel booking, transportation or visa, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Dima Melekh, phone: +375 17 3675881, email: melekhdima@gmail.com, and Ms. Kristina Gonchar, phone: +375 17 3675881, email: gonchar.kristina@mail.ru. For questions regarding the programme of the workshop, please contact Mr. Kristof Douçot at kristof.doucot@unece.org.
29. Up-to-date information, the registration form and relevant material will be made available on the following website in due course at the following URL: http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=43077.