Your Excellency Minister Šarović,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased that I can be present as Chair of this two-day sub regional Workshop, which aims to promote the implementation and ratification of the Pollutant Release Transfer Registers (PRTR) Protocol in countries in South Eastern Europe.

The main objectives of the workshop are to:

i) Improve knowledge of legal, institutional and technical requirements for introducing PRTRs;
ii) Identify key players for introducing and developing PRTRs in your countries;
iii) Identify technical and capacity building specific needs

Achievement of these objectives is expected to foster the ratification, accession or implementation of the Protocol.

We encourage you to identify what challenges and needs are ahead; and to discuss those challenges, and suggested actions so that you can get support from experts and colleagues in finding possible ways to deal with implementing PRTRs in your countries.

The main outputs of the Workshop will include background materials and presentations, and the report with a set of conclusions and recommendations. The outcomes of the workshop will provide a ground for identifying priority needs for future work in the countries concerned.

After the workshop, you are encouraged to continue networking and acquiring profit from available resources in order to implement PRTRs and ratify or accede to the Protocol.

The PRTR Protocol is the first legally binding tool for strengthening the public access to environmental data. So, the Protocol facilitates public participation in matters relating to the environment.
Since the adoption of the Protocol, in 2003 in Kiev, it has been ratified by 32 Parties including 8 in South Eastern Europe. The Protocol entered into force on 8 October 2009.

When looking at our experience of the implementation of the Protocol, we can proudly say that it has become an important tool for strengthening environmental democracy and facilitating dialogue between authorities, citizens stakeholders and industrial operators in the UNECE region and throughout the world.

The Protocol is an 'open' global treaty, which means it is open to all members States of the United Nations, irrespective of the fact that they have or not ratified the Aarhus Convention or are UNECE member States.

In that sense, we must strive for the broadest possible promotion of the Protocol in as many countries as possible and I would like to highlight here the important role played by the Aarhus centers established throughout this Region.

When looking for both national as well as international sources we have to have in our minds that resources devoted to the establishment of the register will very soon pay back, bringing multiple benefits for governments, the private sector and the public.

Another value of the PRTR Protocol lays in its multi-stakeholder approach, which makes it a useful and effective tool in achieving goals in various areas of international environmental governance.

It is important also that governments strive to develop compatible national PRTR systems where possible to enable synergies and cooperative approaches.

As part of our capacity building efforts, the event today has been organised at the decision of the Protocol's Bureau, by the UNECE secretariat in cooperation with the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina and OSCE, and I am very grateful for their excellent work and cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am looking forward to the presentations and discussion and I wish you an interesting session!