



Press Releases/Information Notes



INFORMATION NOTE

UNEP Trade Names Database Helps Customs Officers Fight Illegal Trade of Ozone Depleting Chemicals

PRAGUE, 22 NOVEMBER -- Smugglers thrive in environments where information and communication are absent. Today the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is launching a web-based information tool that helps customs officers overcome an information gap and thus combat illegal trade.

Customs officers who are at the front-line of efforts to prevent illegal trade in hazardous chemicals and other environmentally-sensitive commodities must be able to distinguish between permitted products and ones that are not allowed under national law. With thousands of chemical products in the market, having different packaging, nomenclature, and manufacturers, customs officers are faced with a complex and time-consuming job of identifying the contents of a particular shipment.

With regard to ozone depleting chemicals controlled under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, this job will now be easier thanks to a new online tool just launched by the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics' OzonAction Programme. This [Trade Names database \(available at www.uneptie.org/ozonaction\)](http://www.uneptie.org/ozonaction) enables customs officers to search for commercial trade names of chemicals containing ozone depleting substances (ODS) controlled under this multilateral agreement, as well as their alternatives.

The database currently includes information about nearly 900 commercial chemical products. It is organised around three main components:

- " Trade Name Details - provides information about commercial products containing ozone depleting substances or their alternatives.
- " Chemical Data Sheets - provides chemical formulas, identifying numbers, and other descriptive information about generic chemical substances,
- " Montreal Protocol Phase out Schedule - identifies the specific reduction and phase out time table applicable to different substances controlled under this multilateral environmental agreement.

Some of the key features of the database include:

- " Enables flexible searching for products through many fields, including Harmonised System (HS) codes, Chemical Abstract Service (CAS) numbers, chemical composition, company, trade name, etc
- " Provides quick links to Montreal Protocol phase out schedule so that users can identify whether a product falls under a specific control measure, and if so, when it is being phased out.
- " Allows companies to easily submit updates to UNEP about their own product details and contact information.

In an effort to promote synergies between multilateral environmental agreements with regard to implementation, the database indicates not only whether a chemical product contains ODS controlled under the Montreal Protocol, but also whether it contains greenhouse gases controlled under the Kyoto Protocol.

To meet the Montreal Protocol control schedule, developing countries need to undertake a comprehensive national phase-out programme including the establishment of appropriate licensing systems, as well as implementing monitoring and control tools. Controls on the supply of ODS will play an important role in these compliance measures.

The success of an import/export licensing system depends to a large degree on National Ozone Units (NOUs), customs agencies and industry being able to distinguish between imported chemical products containing ODS and those that contain non-ozone depleting alternatives. Information on trade names in the market will also make it easier for them to track and combat illegal imports.

Those officials require information about the commercial trade names of imported products that they encounter (as indicated on the product packaging and transaction/manifest papers), the chemical composition and manufacturer. Furthermore, many users in small and medium-sized enterprises know the chemicals they use only by trade names. This is especially the case for solvents and refrigerant mixtures. It will help considerably in the work to increase awareness among users in small enterprises if they can differentiate between the trade names of ODS and non-ODS alternatives in the market.

This database is also one of the tools of the international Green Customs initiative of which UNEP DTIE is a founding member. Green Customs is a multi-agency collaborative project providing information and training materials for customs officials to combat illegal trade in commodities of environmental concern. (see www.uneptie.org/ozonaction/customs).

This database is part of the information exchange services provided by UNEP to developing countries to help them meet their compliance obligations under the Montreal Protocol. The OzonAction Programme also provides other clearinghouse services (Training & Networking of ODS Officers) as well as assistance with the development of national ODS phase out strategies (Country Programmes) and Institutional Strengthening support. For more information, contact: Mr. Rajendra Shende, Head UNEP DTIE OzonAction Branch, Tour Mirabeau, 39-43 quai Andre Citroen, Paris 75739 Cedex 15, France or Tel: (33.1) 44.37.14.50, Fax: (33.1) 44.37.14.74, email: ozonaction@unep.fr, www.uneptie.org/ozonaction

Background Information

In July 1999, the first control measure applicable to developing countries under the Montreal Protocol came into effect: the freeze of CFCs at the average consumption and production levels from 1995-1997. In 2002, the same freeze came into effect for halons and methyl bromide. During subsequent years - notably 2005 and 2007 - developing countries must meet significant reduction targets for CFCs and other ODS.

The Parties to the Montreal Protocol have taken a series of decisions related to illegal trade, several of which encourage the exchange of information to help customs officers and others identify ODS and prevent illegal trade in such substances. The most recent relevant decision is Decision XIV/7, "Monitoring of trade in ozone-depleting substances and preventing illegal trade in ozone-depleting substances", in which the Parties "encourage all Parties to exchange information and intensify joint efforts to improve means of identification of ODS and prevention of illegal ODS traffic. In particular those Parties concerned should make even greater use of the UNEP regional networks and other networks in order to increase cooperation on illegal trade issues and enforcement activities". This database is part of UNEP DTIE's OzonAction Programme response to those decisions and needs expressed by members of the Regional Networks of ODS Officers.

