

## **2006 Antarctic Ozone Hole Largest on Record**

### **With 2006 Antarctic ozone hole largest on record, governments launch review of how to protect the ozone layer over the next decade**

**New Delhi, 3 November 2006** – The member governments of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer will conclude their annual meeting today by initiating an assessment of the key future challenges facing the international community as it works to protect the stratospheric ozone shield.

As the Protocol approaches its 20th anniversary next year, governments recognize that the ozone regime's enormous success to date could still be undermined by the continued use of ozone-depleting substances and by weak enforcement of existing regulations. The agreed review will begin at a special meeting next June in Nairobi.

This meeting will address future challenges relating to scientific assessment, the phase out of HCFCs and other ozone-depleting substances, compliance and enforcement, illegal trade and financial support to developing countries.

"The Montreal Protocol offers an inspiring example of what the world community can achieve through cooperation and mutual respect," said Achim Steiner, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Environment Programme, under whose auspices the Protocol was negotiated.

"But releases of harmful chemicals into the atmosphere are continuing at a time when the ozone layer remains particularly fragile. Meanwhile, climate change – a separate but related issue – threatens to overwhelm the planet. We must remain vigilant and ensure that all countries have the capacity to comply with their international commitments," he said.

A recent scientific assessment written by 250 international scientists under the auspices of UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization offers insights into potential options for accelerating the recovery of the ozone layer.

For example, it concluded that the hypothetical elimination after 2006 of all human-caused releases of key substances would make the following relative contributions to the ozone layer's recovery: HCFCs (a transitional replacement for CFCs now targeted for phase out) – 16%; halons (used in fire extinguishers) – 14%; CFCs (once widely used for refrigeration and air conditioning and historically the main culprit in ozone depletion) – 11%; and methyl bromide (used a fumigant for high-value crops) – 5%. (See Table 1 on page 22 of the Executive Summary at [http://ozone.unep.org/Publications/Assessment\\_Reports/](http://ozone.unep.org/Publications/Assessment_Reports/)).

In addition to possible new regulatory measures, the future effectiveness of the Protocol also depends on efforts to strengthen compliance. Many countries still lack the necessary resources and institutions for preventing illegal trade and the unauthorized production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances.

During the conference, the President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, became the

first person to purchase the ozone- and climate-safe SolarChill vaccine refrigerator. The SolarChill technology, which will be placed in the public domain, was made possible through practical cooperation between major international organizations, research institutes and industry. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India addressed the delegates during the high-level segment on Thursday.

The scientific assessment cited above concluded that the health of the ozone layer (measured in terms of “equivalent effective stratospheric chlorine”) at midlatitudes (30° - 60° North and South) will not return to pre-1980 levels until 2049 – some five years later than previously expected. The report also concludes that the health of the ozone layer above the Antarctic will only return to pre-1980 levels around 2065, about 15 years later than previously expected. Meanwhile, according to the World Meteorological Organization this year’s Antarctic ozone ‘hole’ was the largest ever recorded.

**Note to journalists:** For additional information, please contact the meeting press officer Michael Williams at +41-79-409-1528, +91-98-7138-7209 (until Friday night only), or michael.williams@unep.ch; UNEP Spokesperson Nick Nuttall at +254 207 623084, +254 (0) 733 632755 (cell) or nick.nuttall@unep.org; or Elisabeth Waechter at +254 207 623088 or Elisabeth.Waechter@unep.org. See also [www.unep.org/ozone](http://www.unep.org/ozone).

