



Caribbean Countries Agree On Steps To Phase Out Methyl Bromide



"Methyl Bromide phase-out is one of the remaining challenges under the Montreal protocol. Proactive policy development by developing countries and continued financial assistance to them will be the key elements in meeting that challenge" says Klaus Topfer, Executive Director of UNEP.

Hastings, Barbados-Nairobi, May 2001- The Caribbean region is faced with a unique challenge regarding the use of the very toxic and ozone depleting chemical, methyl bromide: while major use of this deadly chemical is for the soil fumigation for cash crops, in Caribbean countries its use as a weedkiller for golf courses to promote tourism is on the rise. This could risk the compliance by the Caribbean countries with the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

The development and implementation of national action plans are essential, and inclusion of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) system for the use of alternatives to methyl bromide need to be strictly followed to avoid the risk of non-compliance. These were some of the key conclusions made during the Regional Policy Development Workshop to Assist Methyl Bromide Phase Out in the Caribbean held from 8-10 May in Barbados.

Jointly organized by the UNEP DTIE OzonAction Programme, and the Government of Barbados through the Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Natural Resources, the workshop assisted countries in the region to identify short-, medium- and long-term policy measures to meet the 2002 freeze, and subsequent reductions of methyl bromide under the Protocol. Additionally, it also encouraged them to develop their own national action plans for methyl bromide phase out, and to prevent new uses of methyl bromide in the region.

Methyl bromide consumption in the Caribbean region is pegged at 7.1 metric tonnes annually. Although this consumption is not very high, there is a possibility that it will increase because some countries in the region are now developing their golf tourism. In Barbados, alone larger quantities are likely to be imported in the near future for golf courses if no effective alternatives are in place.

Representatives coming from both the National Ozone Units and Ministries of Agriculture in eleven countries from the region participated in the workshop. Policy experts from Canada, the United States of America, Spain and a representative from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) also provided additional support throughout the workshop. The workshop recognized that although the region is a low volume consumer of this chemical, it plays an important role in many of the islands' economies. "As we seek to deal with globalization and our agriculture and manufacturing exports are deprived of their traditional protection in the international arena, we will turn to an area which we hold a competitive advantage, tourism, making the use of effective weedkiller in turf grass preparation equally important", said Senator Tyrone Barker, Parliamentary Secretary of Environment, Energy and Natural Resources of Barbados in his opening statement. The participants also visited Royal Westmoreland, a golf course that has not used methyl bromide for turf preparation when it was established.

This regional workshop is part of the information exchange services provided by UNEP to developing countries to help them meet their 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.

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Note to Journalists

Under the landmark international agreement, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, over 170 countries have committed to a precise schedule for reducing and eventually phasing out their consumption and production of ozone depleting substances (ODS). Methyl bromide is an ODS that is used as a fumigant in agriculture on such crops as tomatoes and strawberries, for pest control in structures and stored commodities and for quarantine treatments. The bromine from methyl bromide is approximately 60 times more destructive to ozone on an atom-per-atom basis than the chlorine from CFCs. UNEP's Methyl Bromide Technical Options Committee has identified alternatives for the vast majority of current uses and many of these are already used successfully around the world.

Recognizing its threat to the ozone layer, the Parties to the Montreal Protocol agreed to a global phase-out schedule for methyl bromide in 1997. This schedule requires that industrialized countries phase out methyl bromide by 2005. Developing countries are required to freeze methyl bromide consumption by 2002 with a 20% reduction in 2005 and a phase out by 2015. The Montreal Protocol's Multilateral Fund is providing technical and financial assistance to assist developing countries in meeting the Montreal Protocol phase-out schedule. Over the past 9 years, the Protocol's Multilateral Fund has provided over US\$ 1 billion in financial and technical assistance to support such phase out activities in more than 100 Article 5 countries. This investment by the international community will result in the elimination of approximately 140,000 ODP tonnes of ODS consumption and will contribute significantly to the recover of the ozone layer. Out of these activities, a number of methyl bromide phase out projects have also been approved especially demonstration projects for alternatives to methyl bromide, and policy assistance to developing countries. At present, the direction is to fund investment projects that will really eliminate the use of methyl bromide.

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The mission of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics is to help decision-makers in government, local authorities and industry develop and adopt policies and practices that:

- are cleaner and safer;
- make efficient use of natural resources;
- ensure adequate management of chemicals;
- incorporate environmental costs;
- reduce pollution and risks for humans and the environment.

The UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (UNEP DTIE), with its head office in Paris, is composed of one centre and four units:

- The International Environmental Technology Centre (Osaka), which promotes the adoption and use of environmentally sound technologies with a focus on the environmental management of cities and freshwater basins, in developing countries and countries in transition.
- Production and Consumption (Paris), which fosters the development of cleaner and safer production and consumption patterns that lead to increased efficiency in the use of natural resources and reductions in pollution.
- Chemicals (Geneva), which promotes sustainable development by catalyzing global actions and building national capacities for the sound management of chemicals and the improvement of chemical safety world-wide, with a priority on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and Prior Informed Consent (PIC, jointly with FAO).
- Energy and OzonAction (Paris), which supports the phase-out of ozone depleting substances in developing countries and countries with economies in transition and promotes good management practices and use of energy, with a focus on atmospheric impacts. The UNEP/RISØ Collaborating Centre on Energy and Environment supports the work of the Unit.
- Economics and Trade (Geneva), which promotes the use and application of assessment and incentive tools for environmental policy and helps improve the understanding of linkages between trade and environment and the role of financial institutions in promoting sustainable development.

UNEP DTIE activities focus on raising awareness, improving the transfer of information, building capacity, fostering technology co-operation, partnerships and transfer, improving understanding of environmental impacts of trade issues, promoting integration of environmental considerations

into economic policies and catalyzing global chemical safety.

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