



# United Nations Environment Programme

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PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE  
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

## **UNEP Wins 2005 Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award** ***US Government's prestigious ozone prize goes to UN for the first time***

**Washington/Paris, 4 May 2005** – For the first time ever a UN program, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has won the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award.

The prestigious prize, presented today here in Washington DC, has been awarded to the Paris-based OzonAction Branch of UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics.

Announcing the Award, the US EPA praised the "leadership and innovation of the OzonAction Programme" and said it has benefited well over 140 countries through its unique regional networks of National Ozone Units and global information clearinghouse".

"The appreciation of the award panel highlighting UNEP's leadership and innovation is not only rewarding but also encouraging for our further work," said Klaus Toepfer, UNEP Executive Director. "The Montreal Protocol is succeeding in its objective of phasing out the global production and consumption of ozone depleting substances, but there is still much work left to be done, particularly in developing countries," he said.

"A key factor in the success to date has been financial resources provided to help implement the Protocol," said Toepfer. "In this regard, it is important that one of the key mechanisms underpinning the treaty, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), is adequately replenished this year. This will help ensure that we finish the job, not only for ozone, but also for other global environmental treaties," he said

Accepting the award on behalf of UNEP, Rajendra Shende, head of the OzonAction branch said, "The award reminds us of what can be achieved when the commitment of the poorest nations to protect the Earth for future generations is combined with the resolve of the richest countries to do their part for peace, prosperity and environmental health. What you get are amazing global success stories that go beyond conventional thoughts and immensely benefit humanity," he said.

Global efforts to protect the stratospheric ozone layer were formalised through an international treaty agreed in 1987 called the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone layer.

The ozone layer, which absorbs ultraviolet radiation harmful to living organisms and human health, is in danger from several chemicals currently used in industry and agriculture such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride, methyl chloroform and methyl bromide.

"The treaty is bearing fruits," said Shende. "According to the best scientific knowledge the chemicals that have been destroying the ozone layer are now 'at or near peak,' and could begin to dissipate slowly -- if nations stay the course."

The participation in the effort is almost universal with 189 countries having ratified the Protocol. And the international agreement is increasingly being recognised as a rare and important multi-lateral success story. In his recent report entitled, "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All," UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, described the Montreal Protocol as an "encouraging example showing how global solutions can be found."

Since 1991, the OzonAction Programme has provided services that assist developing countries and Countries with Economies in Transition to achieve and sustain compliance with the Montreal Protocol.

OzonAction empowers the focal point for this multilateral environmental agreement (known as National Ozone Units) through an information clearinghouse, training and regional networking. The programme simplified the messages from the Protocol's Technology and Economic Assessment Panel to help countries to make informed decisions about alternative technologies and ozone-friendly policies.

UNEP is one of the four implementing agencies of the Multilateral Fund that was set-up to assist developing country parties to the Protocol. Over 12 years, nearly US\$2 billion has been disbursed to 145 developing countries to enable them to comply with it.

#### **Note to Editors**

The US EPA established the annual Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award in 1990 to recognize exceptional leadership, personal dedication, and technical achievements in eliminating ozone-depleting substances.

OzonAction: <http://www.unep.fr/en/branches/ozonaction.htm>

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