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### Exemptions & \$420m Phase-out Support Considered in Ozone Meeting

**Montreal, 27 June 2005** – The 189 member governments of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer will decide this week on how best to manage the phase-out of methyl bromide, an effective fumigant and pesticide for strawberries, flowers and other high-value crops that also damages the Earth’s protective ozone shield.

They will also consider the level of funding that should be made available during the three-year period 2006-2008 to enable developing countries to continue complying with their numerous reduction obligations under the Protocol.

After successfully eliminating virtually all uses of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) – historically the greatest cause of ozone destruction – a number of developed countries have struggled to phase out Methyl bromide by the agreed 1 January 2005 deadline.

Many farmers have eliminated or greatly reduced the use of Methyl bromide by switching to other fumigants and to non-chemical measures, such as grafted plants and barrier films. However, 16 countries are requesting “critical use exemptions” in 2006 for certain crops in order to buy more time for adopting more technically or economically feasible alternatives.

Eleven countries received a total of 13,438 metric tonnes of exemptions for the first post-phase-out year of 2005. At the Protocol’s regular high-level conference last November, developed countries were granted 11,000 tonnes of exemptions for 2006. Another 3,000 tonnes were approved on an “interim basis”.

Because they were unable to complete the list of 2006 exemptions as expected, governments decided to reconvene for a one-day Extraordinary Meeting of the Parties (EXMOP-2) on 1 July to finalize the status of the 3,000 tonnes. A similar situation occurred last year, for the first time in the Protocol’s history.

The countries that have requested exemptions for 2006 are Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the UK and the US.

“Governments need to ensure that the trendline for exemptions points downward year by year,” said Executive Director Klaus Toepfer of the United Nations Environment Programme, under whose auspices the Protocol was negotiated.

“This will not only accelerate the ozone layer’s return to health but will send the right signal to their own farmers and to developing countries, whose Methyl bromide phase-out has already begun and is to conclude by 2015,” he said.

The Extraordinary Meeting will be preceded from 27 – 30 June by a preparatory session for the next regular annual conference. The Open-Ended Working Group will consider additional requests for 2006 exemptions totalling 325 tonnes and requests from 15 countries for 2007 exemptions totalling 8,088 tonnes. It will also review a recent survey of



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how methyl bromide is used in the quarantine and pre-shipment of agricultural exports (which is not covered by the Protocol)

In addition, the Working Group will consider a report by the Protocol's Assessment Panel that recommends nearly \$420m in funding to support developing country efforts to phase-out all of their ozone-depleting substances. This funding would constitute the fifth replenishment of the Montreal Protocol's innovative Multilateral Fund.

During its first 15 years, the Multilateral Fund has supported over \$1.8 billion in projects and activities in 139 developing countries. This support has helped to phase-out over 200,000 tonnes of ozone-depleting substances. The next replenishment will help developing countries to further eliminate the use of these substances as they look forward to their 2010 target for eliminating CFCs, halons and other major ozone depletors.

The Working Group's recommendations on all of these issues will be forwarded for final decision to the 12-16 December 17th Meeting of the Parties in Dakar, Senegal.

#### Additional background

Under the Protocol, developed countries are to reduce controlled uses of methyl bromide completely by 2005 (compared to 1991 levels); most have already achieved the Protocol's interim reduction requirements of 25% by 1999, 50% by 2001 and 70% by 2003. For developing countries the schedule started with a 2002 freeze (at average 1995-98 levels) and continues with reductions of 20% by 2005 and 100% by 2015.

Developed countries have reduced the controlled production of methyl bromide from 66,000 tonnes in 1991 to less than 24,850 tonnes in 2003. Developing country production fell from a peak of over 2,380 tonnes in 1998 to some 960 tonnes in 2003.

The Montreal Protocol allows governments to apply for exemptions when there are no technically or economically feasible alternatives or for health or safety reasons. For example, specific Essential Use Exemptions have been granted for CFCs in Metered Dosed Inhalers used in the treatment of asthma and other chronic respiratory diseases.

Destruction of the stratospheric ozone layer increases the levels of UV-B radiation reaching the Earth's surface. Risks include more melanoma and non melanoma skin cancers, more eye cataracts, weakened immune systems, reduced plant yields, damage to ocean eco systems and reduced fishing yields, adverse effects on animals, and more damage to plastics. The ozone layer is expected to stabilize and return to health in 50 years or so – but only if the Montreal Protocol's phase-out schedules are fully respected.

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