



United Nations Environment Programme

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ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

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PRESS RELEASE

Saving the ozone layer: an unfinished agenda

Montreal Protocol conference to address remaining sources of ozone-depleting chemicals

New Delhi, 26 October 2006 – The member governments of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer will meet in New Delhi from 30 October to 3 November to consider how best to reduce the remaining sources of CFCs and other chemicals that destroy the life-protecting stratospheric ozone shield.

“The phase-out of harmful chemicals agreed under the Montreal Protocol has progressed so successfully that the sources of greatest concern 20 years ago will soon be virtually eliminated if the Parties continue to comply fully with the Protocol,” said Executive Secretary Achim Steiner of the United Nations Environment Programme, under whose auspices the Protocol was adopted.

“But this does not mean that the ozone crisis is over. This year’s Antarctic ozone ‘hole’ was the largest on record, while several key CFC replacements are contributing to global warming. Governments need to reduce and shut down the remaining sources of ozone-depleting chemicals and ensure the safe disposal of stocks contained in building foams and in refrigeration and other equipment. When added together, these various sources and stocks can have a significant total impact on the ozone layer,” he said.

The New Delhi meeting will examine the key challenges that governments will face over the next decade in protecting the ozone layer and consider how to ensure that the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances is sustained over time.

In particular, the meeting must take a decision on requests from developed countries for continued exemptions permitting them to use methyl bromide, a fumigant for soils and high-value crops and other commodities, beyond the 2005 phase-out date (the deadline for developing countries is 2015).

The recommended exemptions total some 9,000 metric tonnes for 2007 and around 5,000 tonnes for 2008, down from the 16,050 tonnes agreed earlier for 2005 and the 13,418 tonnes agreed for 2006. The discussions may also touch on the issue of how existing stockpiles of methyl bromide should be treated.

The meeting will take additional decisions on requests from the US and the EU for the continued use of CFCs for asthma inhalers in 2007 and 2008.

Participants will also consider an initial report on a major new scientific assessment written by 250 international scientists (the Executive Summary was released in August by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization). The report concludes 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. The main cause for the delay at midlatitudes is higher estimates of the amounts of CFCs and HCFCs likely to be released into the atmosphere in coming years from obsolete equipment, while a key factor for the delay over the Antarctic is the greater age of air in the vortex over that region.

According to data collected by the ozone secretariat, from 1986 to 1994 developed countries reduced their use of CFCs – historically the major cause of ozone depletion – by 98%. Developing countries are expected to achieve a 97% phase out within a few years. However, this scenario assumes full compliance with all provisions of the Protocol. In that regard, the Meeting in New Delhi will also consider how to ensure compliance through possible additional measures, including measures to address illegal trade.

Note to journalists: The conference will take place at the Vigyan Bhavan Conference Centre; press accreditation requires the submission of press credentials. For additional information, please contact the meeting press officer Michael Williams at +41-79-409-1528 (cell) 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