

Beating the Clock: Asia Pacific Make Strides in Early Phase Out of Ozone-Depleting Chemicals

Langkawi/ Bangkok, 19 March 2008 – Asia Pacific countries are pacing ahead in meeting their commitments to end production and consumption of chemicals that harm the Earth's protective ozone layer, years ahead of internationally-agreed deadlines.

"Their actions prove that when there is political will and the right enabling conditions, the countries in this region can meet and even exceed their treaty commitments, which provides inspiration for the implementation of other environmental agreements," said Rajendra Shende, Chief, OzonAction Branch, UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, during the Meeting of National Ozone Units of 22 countries in South Asia and South East Asia and the Pacific Network in Langkawi, Malaysia, which concluded today. East Timor, one of the last four countries which have not ratified the Protocol, participated for the first time.

Under the Montreal Protocol for Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, Asia Pacific countries agreed to phase out ozone-depleting chemicals like chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride (CTC) by 2010, and methyl chloroform and methyl bromide by 2015. Financial assistance was provided by the Multilateral Fund to cost-effectively phase out these ozone depleting chemicals. National Ozone Officers gathered at the meeting to discuss current issues, future strategies, action plans and reviewed where countries in the region stand in meeting the treaty obligations

At least five countries - Sri Lanka, Maldives China, Indonesia, and Fiji – have phased out CFCs, nearly two years ahead of the 2010 deadline. Sri Lanka and Maldives recently joined ranks with China, Indonesia, and Fiji in announcing early phase out of CFCs in their countries. Last year, China shut down five of its six remaining CFC plants, while Indonesia imposed a ban on the import of CFCs into the country in January 2008. Fiji phased out its use of CFC as early as 2000. In addition, 14 countries in the region have phased out CTCs and 13 countries have phased out halons ahead of the 2010 schedule.

"I am confident that the early phase-out of these countries will serve as an example for other developing countries in the region and will motivate them to strengthen their regulations and control of the use of ODS to reach the phase-out deadlines proscribed by the treaty," said Mr. Mokhtarud-din-Bin-Husain, Senior Principal, Assistant Director of the Ministry of Agriculture of Malaysia. The meeting was hosted by the Department of Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Malaysia.

Completing the phase out of CFCs in developing countries is by far the most important next step in protecting the ozone layer. Other challenges highlighted were the need for countries to speed up in meeting their obligations, dealing with methyl bromide exempted under the Montreal Protocol, stocks of ozone depleting chemicals in existing equipment (called "banks" of these chemicals), a growing black market for illegal CFCs and the freeze on production of Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) in 2013 and phaseout in 2030. While HCFCs are ozone-depleting chemicals, their high global warming potential means that their freeze and elimination under the Montreal Protocol will also garner significant benefits in climate change protection

The most significant and inspiring achievement comes from the Beijing Olympic Games to be held later in 2008. All the venues of Olympic games and events will not use CFCs and HCFCs, making it first "ozone friendly" Olympics of the modern times .

Asian countries are also moving ahead in early phase out of other ozone depletion substances like methyl chloroform and methyl bromide, due for phase out in 2015. Afghanistan, Bhutan, Brunei, DPR Korea, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam have already ceased production and consumption of methyl chloroform, while Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, DPR Korea, India, Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and the Republic of Korea have phased out methyl bromide, used for soil and post-harvest fumigation.

For more information, please contact:

Ms. Satwant Kaur, Regional Information Officer, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Tel: 02 2882127; Mobile: 0839086000. E-mail: kaur@un.org

NOTES TO EDITORS:

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)

UNEP is the United Nations system's designated entity for addressing environmental issues at the global and regional level. Its mandate is to coordinate the development of environmental policy consensus by keeping the global environment under review and bringing emerging issues to the attention of governments and the international community for action.

Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer

The Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer is an international [treaty](#) designed to protect the [ozone](#)

[layer](#) by phasing out the production and consumption of a number of substances believed to be responsible for [ozone depletion](#). The treaty was opened for signature on [September 16, 1987](#) and entered into force on [January 1, 1989](#). Since then, it has undergone five revisions, in 1990 ([London](#)), 1992 ([Copenhagen](#)), 1995 ([Vienna](#)), 1997 ([Montreal](#)), and 1999 ([Beijing](#)). Due to its widespread adoption and implementation it has been hailed as an example of exceptional international cooperation "Perhaps the single most successful international agreement to date..."

About the Compliance Assistance Programme (CAP) of UNEP DTIE

UNEP as an Implementing Agency of the Multilateral Fund of the Montreal Protocol has a unique regionalized programme that delivers compliance assistance services to countries to assist them meet the international commitments under the Protocol. The compliance regime requires countries to: achieve and sustain compliance, promote a greater sense of country ownership and implement the agreed Executive Committee framework for strategic planning.

UNEP through the Compliance Assistance Programme (CAP) has moved from project management approach to a direct implementation initiative through its specialized staff. Consistent with the above approach the Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ROAP) CAP team has developed to be the centre for policy advice, compliance guidance and conduct training to refrigeration technicians, customs officers and other relevant stakeholders on compliance issues, promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation and promote high-level awareness by utilizing UNEP's staff.

OzonAction Programme: www.unep.fr/ozonaction

Multilateral Fund: www.multilateral.fund.org

Ozone Secretariat: www.ozone.unep.org