

Switching to Ozone-Friendly Inhalers: Industry and Governments Join Hands to Ensure Smooth Transition for Asthma and Chronic Respiratory Disease Patients

Langkawi/Bangkok, 15 March 2008 – Industry and government today penned their commitment to work together towards a smooth transition to ozone-friendly metered-dose inhalers under the *Langkawi Declaration on Public-Private Partnership on Phasing Out CFC Metered Dose Inhaler*, agreed today at a meeting that brought together health and environment officials, industry representatives and patient groups.

Metered-dose inhalers, commonly used as treatment for millions of asthma and chronic respiratory patients in the region, contain chlorofluorocarbon (CFC). Under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, developing countries will have to cease production and consumption of CFCs and other ozone depleting chemicals by 2010. Asia Pacific accounts for 60 per cent of CFC use in MDI production.

"The Langkawi Declaration recognizes that there is very little time, and will go a long way in ensuring that the phaseout occurs sooner rather than later. In less than 22 months, there will no longer be any CFC-based inhalers, and we have to prepare health officials, doctors and nurses as well as patients for this inevitable change. Our aim is to ensure that this adjustment is done with the least discomfort and inconvenience, particularly for the patients," said Atul Bagai, Regional Officer (Networking), Compliance Assistance Programme (CAP), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP).

Asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) are two very common respiratory diseases that affect an estimated 300 million worldwide. More than a quarter of adults in the developing countries suffer from COPD. The prevalence of asthma has also steadily increased from nearly 1 per cent in Indonesia to over 30 per cent in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia.

"A number of MDI industries are already working towards converting their facilities to produce CFC-free alternatives. However, the introduction of these alternatives alone does not lead to a successful transition. There are still major concerns like preference of patients, the price, the availability of alternatives and how doctors prescribe medications. It is important that each country develops a strategy to address each of this issue," said Bagai.

More than 80 participants from 24 countries, health, industry and patient groups participated in the Regional Workshop on Phasing-out CFC-based Metered Dose Inhaler (MDI) for South Asia. The workshop was organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to assist countries in Asia Pacific to develop their MDI transition strategy. The workshop was followed by the Joint Meeting of SEAP and SA Networks of Ozone Depleting Substances Officers with the theme "Roadmap to 2010", 17-19 March 2008, Langkawi, Malaysia.

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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) for Asia and the Pacific

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) to 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.

For more information:

OzonAction Programme : www.unep.fr/ozonaction

Multilateral Fund: www.multilateralfund.org

Ozone Secretariat: www.ozone.unep.org

UNEP ROAP News Release 08/2