



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة • 联合国环境规划署
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

For use of the media only;
not an official document.

PRESS RELEASE

With ozone layer as fragile as ever, governments agree sharp cuts in methyl bromide plus \$470 million package for phasing out harmful chemicals

Dakar, 16 December 2005 – The member states of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer have agreed to a budget of \$470 million to support the continuing transition by developing countries to CFC-free refrigerators and other ozone-safe technologies during the three-year period 2006 – 2008.

The strong push to complete the developing country phase out of ozone-depleting substances reflects continued international concern about the damaged condition of the stratospheric ozone layer. In September of this year, the annual Antarctic spring ozone “hole” reached a maximum of 10 million square miles (25.9 million sq km), equivalent to the size of North America, and close to the record set in 2003.

In addition, last week saw reports of a new scientific study which concludes that, even if the chemical phase-outs agreed under the Montreal Protocol are fully achieved, the ozone layer will not fully recover until 2065 – fifteen years later than previously estimated – due to the continued release of CFCs from old equipment in developed countries.

A depleted ozone layer allows more UV-B radiation to reach 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, reduced fishing yields, adverse effects on animals, and more damage to plastics.

Under the Protocol, developing countries have until 2010 to phase out CFCs and halons and until 2015 to phase out methyl bromide. The newly agreed funding package will supplement the almost \$2 billion already disbursed since 1990 by the Protocol’s Multilateral Fund on capacity-building and projects for phasing out ozone-depleting substances.

“Completing the phase out of CFCs by developing countries is essential for returning the stratospheric ozone layer to health,” said Marco Gonzalez, Executive Secretary of the Protocol, which was negotiated under the auspices of the UN Environment Programme. “Today’s agreement demonstrates that the global partnership for ozone protection is alive and well.”

The meeting has also reached agreement on the continuing phase out by developed countries of several remaining uses of CFCs and of methyl bromide (a fumigant for high-value crops). The phase-out deadlines for these countries have already passed; however, the Protocol allows governments to request specific, time-limited "critical-use exemptions" when technically or economically feasible alternatives do not yet exist.

Earlier conferences granted exemptions for methyl bromide to 16 developed countries totaling 16,050 metric tonnes for 2005 (the first phase-out year) and 13,014 tonnes for 2006 (plus an additional 404 tonnes for 2006 that were confirmed today). The 2007 critical-use exemptions agreed today for Australia (41 tonnes), Canada (40), Japan (636) and the US (6,749) amount to some 7,466 tonnes – representing a forty-five percent reduction from the amounts agreed for the previous year.

"This sharp year-on-year decline greatly strengthens the credibility of the Protocol. Farmers and other users of methyl bromide are clearly working hard to find replacements to this dangerous chemical," said Mr. Gonzalez.

The total agreed essential-use exemptions for CFCs in metered dose inhalers for asthmatics of 2,039 tonnes in 2006 and 1,243 tonnes in 2007 also show an important decline. The CFC phase-out year for developed countries was 1996.

Other issues addressed in Dakar have included the challenge of reducing illegal trafficking in CFCs and other substances and a recent joint report of the Protocol's Technology and Economics Assessment Panel and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on ozone and global warming interlinkages entitled "Safeguarding the Ozone Layer and the Global Climate System".

This week's conference consisted of the Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 17th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The conference also celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Vienna Convention.

Note to journalists: For more information, please contact Michael Williams at +41-22-917-8242, +41-79-4091528 (cell), or michael.williams@unep.ch. See also www.unep.org/ozone