

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE OZONE LAYER
16 September 2009**

Sustainable development depends, in large part, on the implementation of agreed environmental goals, targets and objectives. Among the considerable number of multilateral environmental agreements agreed between states over the past 40 years, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and, in particular, its Montreal Protocol stands out. The manner in which this instrument for repairing and recovering the Earth's protective shield has been financed and implemented serves as an inspiring example of what is possible.

This year's observance marks yet another milestone, with the deposit of the instruments of accession to the Convention and the Protocol by the youngest democracy in the world, Timor-Leste. Until today, it was the only remaining State outside the ozone protection regime. Now, the Convention and Protocol have achieved universal participation – unique status among the hundreds of treaties deposited with the Secretary-General. Timor-Leste's action sends a strong signal of global solidarity, not only for addressing ozone depletion but for tackling other pressing multilateral challenges, of which climate change is pre-eminent.

Accumulating evidence indicates that the phase-out of substances known as chlorofluorocarbons or CFCs has, since 1990, alleviated the progression of climate change by as much as 12 years. International cooperation on CFCs is a timely affirmation that, through unity of purpose and concerted action, we can minimize risks to our planet and build a safer world for future generations. It is a lesson we must take to heart as we prepare for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December.

Some weeks ago, experts from the Montreal Protocol and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol met in Geneva, Switzerland to chart a strategy on a group of chemicals that cause climate change. Hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs, which are broadly used as replacements for ozone-depleting substances in foams, refrigeration and air conditioning systems, could, if widely used, contribute significantly to climate change by 2050, thereby undermining efforts to reduce the better-known greenhouse gases, principally carbon dioxide and methane from fossil fuel burning and deforestation.

By working together, the ozone and climate treaties can multiply their impact for sustainable development. Other benefits are likely to include improved energy efficiency in industrial and household processes and appliances, and spin-offs for the wider chemicals agenda, including in the areas of waste management and human health.

The International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer comes some 80 days before the Copenhagen climate conference. Governments must use that occasion to seal the deal on an ambitious, comprehensive and equitable new climate agreement. Without action on climate change, the world faces profound social, economic and environmental disruption. The example of the Montreal Protocol sends a powerful message that action on major global challenges is not only possible, but that the financial and human benefits invariably outweigh the costs.