OZONE DAY CELEBRATION IN CHILE

During the celebration of the International Day for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, CONAMA and the Ministry of Health have appealed to take care of the ozone layer and to protect from the UV radiation effects.

At the event, the authorities made known the OzonAction Education Pack, developed by UNEP, UNESCO and WHO, and that will be launched simultaneously today Friday in the cities of Santiago de Chile, New Delhi (India) and Nairobi (Kenya).

(Santiago, September 15, 2006) A call to all Chilean people to take care of our ozone layer and to protect themselves from the harmful UV radiation effects for our health, was made this morning by the Public Health Sub secretary, Lidia Amarales, together with the Executive Director of Conama, Rodrigo Guzmán, on the occasion of the celebration this Saturday 16th of September of the International Day for the Protection of the Ozone Layer.

Together with the Information and Communications Officer of UNEP's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rody Oñate –further to representatives from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), the National Cancer Corporation (CONAC) and the Chilean Dermatology Society-, the authorities participated in an outstanding ceremony that took place in front of the Contemporary Art Museum (MAC), and that gathered over a hundred girls and boys from the Primary School "Las Nieves" from San Bernardo.

At the event the students got to know through the material provided by Conama, the derived effects from the depletion of the ozone layer in Chile and in the planet, and the consequent increase of ultraviolet (UV) radiation on the Earth surface.

According to Sub secretary Amarales, "an important aspect of the new Ozone Law that was enacted last March, refers to diffusion, assessment, prevention and people protection measures in face of ultraviolet radiation.

"In such sense, as the Ministry of Health we are very satisfied because for the first time in

Chile issues such as health and environment effects assessment have been incorporated, further to the regulation of instruments emitting UV radiation, sunscreens, sunglasses and sunburn protecting products", stated the authority.

From his part, the Director(s) of Conama, Rodrigo Guzmán, sustained that "this Day's celebration represents a great opportunity to let people know about the effects of the depletion of the Ozone Layer in Chile and in the world, as well as of the efforts made by our country to reduce said impacts in the environment. In such sense, I would like to highlight the fact that Conama has funded more than 30 projects of industrial conversion, which has allowed Chile to phase out about 530 ton of Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC), thanks to the delivery of incentives for more than 3 millions of dollars. Within the group of companies covered by this fund, the ones dedicated to foam manufacturing and refrigeration stand out", concluded Guzmán.

At the end of the activity, the authorities gave to the teachers and students attending the event the OzonAction Education Pack, globally launched today Friday in the cities of Nairobi (Kenya), New Delhi (India) and Santiago de Chile. The set contains an entire teaching and learning programme, based on basic knowledge, practical skills and participation, to enable children to learn about simple solutions to protect the ozone layer and safely enjoy the sun.

The Pack, jointly developed by UNEP, UNESCO and WHO, includes a Guide for Primary School Teachers, Ozone Map, Ozzy Calendar, Who Knows? Cards and a UV Meter.

Why does the ozone layer deplete?

The problematic of the ozone layer depletion dates back to 1974, when scientists demonstrated by lab tests that artificial compounds created by men destroyed ozone, a fact that was lately confirmed by direct measures of chlorine, ozone and other compounds in the atmosphere. At the same time, it was discovered the so-called Ozone Hole over the Antarctic, a phenomenon which has been repeating since 1989, and that actually covers almost the entire frozen continent. On the other hand, it has also been possible to detect a sustained decrease of the ozone layer levels in the whole Earth.

The ozone role is to filter the majority of the ultraviolet radiation (UV) from the sun, as well as to determine the thermal structure of a great portion of the stratosphere.

The main derived effect from the ozone layer depletion is the increase of UV radiation (wavelength greater than 320 nanometers) on the Earth's surface. In effect, the report from the Atmospheric Sciences Panel of the Montreal Protocol establishes that UV radiation levels will increase in the coming years, as a result from the emissions of Ozone Depleting Substances into the atmosphere.

According to the experts, the main cause of the ozone layer depletion is due to the release of great amounts of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) into the atmosphere, being the most important Halons (contained in fire extinguishing systems), chlorofluorocarbons (known as CFC or "Freon", mainly used in the manufacture of refrigeration and air conditioning devices, in mixtures for sterile chambers, in the manufacture of mattresses, isolation rigid foams, inhalers and some aerosols) and Methyl Bromide (mainly used in agriculture as soil disinfectant and in fumigation of fruits for exportation).

Law Nº20.096 establishing control mechanisms for ozone depleting substances

In a complementary form and as a key instrument for ensuring that the achievement in the phase out of ozone depleting substances consumption is maintained over time, a law was enacted last month of March which controls the entry into the country of Ozone Depleting Substances according to the goals established by the Montreal Protocol, and at the same time establishing protection and evaluation mechanisms of the effects produced by the depletion of said layer.

Among the main aspects of said Law, it status that the instruments and devices emitting ultraviolet radiation must include in their technical specifications or labels, a warning regarding health risks for people. It proposes that sunscreen, sunglasses and other

sunburn protecting products carry on indications about their efficiency in view of the different degrees of the ozone layer depletion.

In this same manner, the meteorological reports daily issued by television media, written press, radio and Internet, must include backgrounds on ultraviolet radiation levels and the associated risks for the population.

The measures adopted by Chile for complying with the obligations established under the Montreal Protocol jointly with the efforts of the international community, will allow, according to estimations made by scientists, the recovery of the ozone layer in the middle of the present century.