



Country Leads in Phasing Out Ozone Depleting Substances

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Namibia leads the way in sub-Saharan Africa in phasing out ozone depleting substances (ODS). Ozone, a gas in the atmosphere that absorbs potentially harmful ultraviolet rays reaching the earth from the sun, is destroyed by chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and hydrofluorocarbons used mainly in refrigeration and air conditioning, halons used in fire extinguishers and methylbromide used as a pesticide in agriculture.

CFCs are substances that drive or act as fuel for systems such as cooling installations, asthma pumps, deodorant spray cans, dry cleaning and mattress-making processes.

The world is supposed to phase out substances that destroy the ozone layer by 2010. However, Namibia has not imported any CFCs into the country since 2005.

Namibia is a signatory to both the Vienna Convention for the protection of the ozone layer and the Montreal Protocol for the phase-out of ozone depleting chemicals.

The country on Tuesday joined the world in commemorating the Ozone Day and the 21st anniversary of the Montreal Protocol, which falls on September 16.



Deputy Director of the Namibia Investment Centre, Freddy !Gaoseb, said at the commemoration, Namibia leads the way in phasing out ODS because of its sound policy, legislation and smart partnerships with other government agencies and industries.

He said while the protocol is succeeding, the final success is not yet achieved, until all ozone depleting substances are completely phased out in both developed and developing countries.

As a result of the protocol, the total abundance of ODS in the atmosphere has decreased in recent years with the substantial recovery of the ozone layer expected around mid-century.

The ozone layer offers a protective shield by absorbing potentially harmful ultraviolet

radiation that can cause skin cancer, eye cataracts, weakened immune system, reduce agricultural production and disturb the marine food chain.

Since 2005 when the ministry introduced an incentive scheme for the conversion of cooling installations from CFCs to non-CFCs-based technology, 78 installations from both the public and private institutions have benefited from the scheme.

Saara Hamunyela, Assistant Ozone Officer at the Ozone Unit in the Ministry of Trade and Industry said yesterday there are still many applications from people wanting to convert their installations.

The ministry's phase- out management plan comes to an end this year.

The first warning about ozone depletion was in 1970, with results showing in 1980 that man-made chemicals are responsible for ozone depletion. Namibia signed the Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol in 1993 and launched its country programme in 1995 while the ozone office was created in 1996 to coordinate and implement various activities such as training and public awareness.

Hamunyela advised people to buy products that are ozone friendly such as spray cans that are labelled as such and fridges without CFCs. They should also ask technicians about the cost of changing their existing systems and applications.

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