INFORMAL ROUND TABLE
ON
INFORMATION EXCHANGE

FINAL REPORT

Paris, France
1 October 1993

Organized by: The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Funded by: The Multilateral Fund (MF)
INTRODUCTION

This is the report of the Informal Round Table on Information Exchange, which was held at UNEP IE/PAC’s Paris office on 1 October 1993.

In light of the changing international/national ODS control measures, as well as the rapidly development of alternative technologies, UNEP IE/PAC initiated a self-examination of its OzonAction Programme’s information exchange activities under the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol. This on-going examination seeks to improve UNEP IE/PAC’s information exchange activities to better serve the needs of Article 5 (developing) countries.

As part of this process, UNEP IE/PAC hosted a 1 day meeting that comprised a small group of experts knowledgeable in information exchange issues related to the Montreal Protocol. The participants included an information specialist from an Article 5 national ozone protection unit, a member of the UNEP Technical and Economic Assessment Panel, a member of the UNEP Economic Options Committee (EOC), the UNEP-SIDA regional network coordinator, and UNEP IE/PAC staff.

The objectives of the round table were to:

° review the progress to-date of UNEP IE/PAC’s clearinghouse;
° share UNEP IE/PAC’s lessons learnt;
° discuss the information exchange needs of Article 5 countries; and
° develop recommendations on how to improve the clearinghouse’s operation.

In addition to being useful for the improvement of UNEP IE/PAC’s clearinghouse, the round table had the additional benefit of bringing together key members of the EOC responsible for the developing country sections of the Committee’s revised report, planned for 1994. The round table was thus an opportunity for the EOC to meet with developing country representative and one of the Multilateral Fund Implementing Agencies to discuss concerns of Article 5 countries.

The round table generated specific suggestions for improvement in the following areas:

° identifying the proper target user groups;
° selecting types of information appropriate to the needs of Article 5 countries;
° choosing information dissemination mechanisms appropriate to Article 5 countries’s needs and capabilities;
° measuring clearinghouse success; and
° adjusting the clearinghouse function in the context of the Montreal Protocol’s dynamic character.
Key recommendations and conclusions include:

° Article 5 countries need technical information to help build their national capacity to make independent decisions about phase-out projects.

° UNEP IE/PAC should strive to provide “neutral” information and let decision-makers in Article 5 countries formulate their own decisions.

° UNEP IE/PAC should provide Article 5 countries with information immediately, even if it is in draft form.

° Government officers in national ozone units should be the primary targets of UNEP IE/PAC’s information clearinghouse activities. This is the most efficient and cost-effective means of information dissemination.

° Types of information needed by Article 5 countries includes case studies and lists of vendors of equipment and chemical products.

° Awareness about the information exchange services offered by UNEP IE/PAC is apparently not reaching all Article 5 countries and must be redesigned.

° UNEP IE/PAC needs to prioritize and target its information exchange activities.

UNEP IE/PAC will use the recommendations to adjust the clearinghouse’s current activities to better serve Article 5 countries. UNEP IE/PAC will use the recommendations of this round table as one source of input into its 1994 Work Programme under the Multilateral Fund.

Due to the open format of the discussions, the sequence of the comments have been changed somewhat in order to group related remarks together. The list of participants is included as an annex.

DISCUSSIONS

Overview of OzonAction Information Clearinghouse:

UNEP IE/PAC began the discussions by welcoming the participants and reviewing the objectives of the round table.

UNEP IE/PAC then provided an overview of the OzonAction Information Clearinghouse, including a description of the clearinghouse components and progress/achievements since the clearinghouse’s inception.

Points raised in the overview included:

1 The initials of the person(s) who contributed the comment appear in parentheses after the statement.
°The entire OzonAction programme was initiated in June 1991.

°The programme's development was characterized as follows:
  - June 1991 - end 1992: the "expansion" phase of the programme
  - 1993: "growth and consolidation"
  - 1994: expected to be "improvement and increased efficiency".

°The clearinghouse is a pointer service - it is meant to provide a "taste" of information and refer persons to sources of assistance. It should therefore be considered an information "processing house", not an information "generator".

°It is not a source of exhaustive information and does not generate information on its own.

°The role of the clearinghouse is to provide information to help developing country decision-makers make decisions.

_The Phillipine's Prior Experience with UNEP IE/PAC's Clearinghouse:_

The Phillipines has not found the UNEP IE/PAC office to be so useful in the past. It's role is "strange to us". The on-line system has not appeared to be working. Queries that we have submitted in the past have not been responded to quickly. This lack of effectiveness means that there will be a reluctance to increase UNEP IE/PAC's budget. (CT)

_Types of Information Needed by Article 5 Countries:_

UNEP IE/PAC explained that it uses country programmes, inter alia, to identify priority sectors for collecting information.

Access for alternative technologies should be made available to Article 5 countries, but this is not always the case. (CT)

When an Article 5 country is preparing its investment projects, it may be susceptible to the claims of consultants and product suppliers if it does not have the right information to make an informed decision. (CT)

One need of the Phillipines is to be able to independently evaluate technical information it receives from consultants, vendors, Implementing Agencies, etc. For example, the World Bank is very aggressive in implementing its projects. The Phillipines must rely on the Bank's consultants very much due to its lack of national capacity. (CT)

The case of a proposed recycling facility project was cited in which the Phillipines could not independently evaluate whether such a facility would be appropriate or effective for their country. In such a situation, the Phillipines would like to see case studies of similar facilities in other countries. Such comparative information would be useful for decision-making. (CT)
UNEP IE/PAC should consult the projects already implemented under the Multilateral Fund to collect case studies in developing countries. (RVS)

The Philippines has reproduced UNEP IE/PAC Technical Brochure series and distributed them to industry. There is a high demand for them, and they are quite useful. (CT)

UNEP IE/PAC should strive to provide "neutral" information (e.g., presenting all sides of a position on a technical question) and let decision-makers in Article 5 countries formulate their own decisions. Participants acknowledged that although there may be some risk to this approach (e.g. passing on commercially- or politically-biased information), it was the best way to serve the information needs of developing countries. (RVS, PC)

There should be research done as to what types of information is needed by Article 5 countries. (CT)

As the Philippines considers the refrigeration and air-conditioning sector to be important, it would like to receive information such as lists of vendors of refrigeration recycling equipment and alternative refrigerant chemical suppliers. (CT)

Case studies, checklists of questions, and lists of independent experts are types of information needed by Article 5 countries. (PC)

The Philippines’ experience is that in some cases they have received adequate information that is on-time, for example information received from World Bank consultants. (CT)

Article 5 countries need information immediately, even if it is in draft form. Information that is comprehensive and peer-reviewed is desirable, but it is useless if it arrives too late. Therefore, draft information that arrives quickly is preferred. (CT, PC)

Government officers at national ozone protection units must have credibility in the eyes of their industry clients. UNEP IE/PAC’s Catalogues of CFC-Free Technologies are examples of publications that would help build such credibility. (PC)

Dissemination Methods and Information Format:

Multinational companies, especially big chemical companies, have their own internal networks for distributing information, thus UNEP IE/PAC may wish to target smaller companies who do not benefit from such networks. (CT, RVS)

The poor condition of the communications infrastructure in many developing countries is a considerable impediment for those countries to access on-line information systems. (CT)

Since timeliness is so important, updates to information already disseminated are necessary. Looseleaf binder format is therefore preferable. (CT)

Target Users:
UNEP IE/PAC explained what groups it considers to be targets for the information clearinghouse and how these groups were selected.

Points raised in this section included:

° until the present, UNEP IE/PAC considered developing country government officers as the primary users of the clearinghouse, and industry associations (not industry itself) and Implementing Agencies as secondary target users.

° UNEP IE/PAC currently responds to all inquiries, regardless of country or organization, with developing countries receiving priority; and

° UNEP IE/PAC has used country programmes, inter alia, to identify priority sectors for disseminating information.

An analogy was drawn between ozone protection and the population growth issue, where international assistance is focussed on countries that have large populations and high potential for growth. It may therefore be cost-effective to target ODS phase-out information to the developing countries with high potential growth in ODS consumption (e.g., China and India). (PC)

Government officers and regional network officers should be the primary targets of information dissemination. Industry staff, researchers, and academics should not be a primary target. (IK)

The Phillipines has achieved cost-effective information disseminatin through its industry associations. (CT)

Government officers in national ozone units should be the primary targets of UNEP IE/PAC's information clearinghouse activities. (PC, RVS, CT)

Improving Response to Data Collection Efforts:

UNEP IE/PAC should contact selected companies to discuss what incentives or disincentives might work to improve the response to the clearinghouse's data collection activities. (RVS)

Quality Review of Information Collected:

For quality review of the OzonAction library (e.g., suggestions about which documents to include in the collection), UNEP IE/PAC should continue its practice of contacting the Chairs of the Technical Options Committees for recommendations on specific TOC members who would do the work. (RVS)

Technical Options Committees (TOCs):
The UNEP Technical Options Committees may want to write their reports in plainer and more focussed to decision-maker, as in the case of Bob Watson's 25-page summary. (RVS)

Virtually nobody in the Phillipine Government has read all of the TOC reports in their entirety. They have found UNEP IE/PAC's summary technical brochures quite useful, however. (CT)

**UNEP Regional Networks:**

UNEP IE/PAC made a presentation about the regional networks of ODS Officers, which included the following points:

- UNEP IE/PAC is establishing networks for cooperation among government officers in charge of designing strategies to phase-out ODS (known as "ODS Officers").

- The first ODS Officers Network in the South East Asia and the Pacific region ("ODSONET-SEAP") was initiated with funding from Sweden and includes ODS officers from 9 developing countries in the region and 3 developed countries with advanced phase-out programmes from outside the region.

- Two other networks are being established in Latin America with funding from the Multilateral Fund.

UNEP could be more effective at a local level if "permanent" UNEP regional officers were in place. (PC)

**Measuring Success:**

As one possible measurement of success, UNEP IE/PAC could contact national ozone protection units to obtain a gauge of their success "in the field". Their success in assisting national industry could reflect the quality of assistance provided by UNEP IE/PAC's clearinghouse. Such local measurements could include number of workshops held, number of inquiries, and number of visits to facilities. (RVS)

Written surveys is not necessarily a bad, and in fact can be quite good, method for measuring success, but it is essential that UNEP IE/PAC compiles statistics. Such statistics would indicate whether responses are representative: qualitative comments are not useful. (PC)

**Concluding Observations:**

Robert Van Slooten –

- Some clearinghouse services are undertaken without a clear knowledge of the needs of Article 5 countries, and some of its assumptions are not well-founded.
°Support for national ozone protection units is of critical importance.

°The clearinghouse should not try to collect/provide information where it can't be effective.

°The clearinghouse should not try to educate the Implementing Agencies or their consultants about how to accomplish their jobs.

°The clearinghouse's "pointer system" approach is the correct approach to take, in light of the clearinghouse's available resources, and it should not get dragged into attempting to provide "full service".

Carmen Trinidad --

°After the round table discussion, she has a better understanding of what UNEP IE/PAC's information exchange services. Awareness of these activities is not well-communicated to the outside world.

°The discussion clarified that UNEP IE/PAC is not a full technical assistance service, but rather a "pointer" service. This is a misconception that others share.

°It is crucial that UNEP IE/PAC analyze exactly what Article 5 information needs are before it begins a new project.

°Assessment of technical information has historically been based on what developed countries want, not what Article 5 countries need.

°In many cases, Article 5 countries have not been consulted when information exchange activities were designed.

°By providing independent information, UNEP IE/PAC's clearinghouse can help Article 5 countries break their dependency on consultants and build national capacity to make informed technical decisions.

Penelope Canan --

°UNEP IE/PAC should conduct a survey (not necessarily in questionnaire format) of Article 5 information needs: a needs assessment from each region is necessary.

°UNEP IE/PAC needs to prioritize and target its information exchange activities.

°Government officers at national ozone protection units should be strengthened through information exchange.

°The amount of staff time and financial resources devoted to on-line information delivery systems might not be the best use of resources for serving Article 5 countries' needs.
Conclusions Agreed Upon by All Participants:

° Government ozone protection units in Article 5 countries should be the primary target of the information clearinghouse.

° Information should be disseminated quickly, even if in draft form.

° Information about ODS phase-out legislation and regulations are needed by Article 5 countries.

° Hard copy publications and faxes are well-suited to the capabilities of Article 5 countries.

° UNEP IE/PAC should have an independent expert audit the on-line system to determine if information content and delivery mechanism is suitable to the needs and capabilities of Article 5 countries. This should be included in the 1994 Work Programme.

° Questionnaire surveys should be considered, but they should be well planned and not used too often.

° There should be an advisory group for the clearinghouse.

° The OzonAction newsletter and the Technical Brochure series should be considered success stories of the clearinghouse.
## INFORMAL ROUND TABLE INFORMATION EXCHANGE
### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1 October 1993

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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>ADDRESS/TELEPHONE/FAX</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aloisi de Larderel, Mrs. Jacqueline</td>
<td>UNEP IE/PAC</td>
<td>UNEP IE/PAC</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>39-43 André Citroen</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75015 Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tel: (33) 1-44-37-14-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fax: (33) 1-44-37-14-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canan, Dr. Penelope</td>
<td>University of Denver</td>
<td>University of Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Sociology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member of UNEP Economic Options Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>University Park</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Denver, Colorado 80208</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tel: (1) 303-871-2049</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Fax: (1) 303-871-2090</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curlin, Mr Jim</td>
<td>UNEP IE/PAC</td>
<td>UNEP IE/PAC</td>
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<td>Consultant, UNEP IE/PAC OzonAction Programme</td>
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<td>Koekeritz, Mrs. Ingrid</td>
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<td>UNEP IE/PAC</td>
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<td>Regional Network Coordinator, UNEP IE/PAC OzonAction Programme</td>
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<td>Shende, Mr. Rajendra</td>
<td>Coordinator, UNEP IE/PAC OzonAction Programme</td>
<td>UNEP IE/PAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trinidad, Ms. Carmen</td>
<td>Montreal Protocol Secretariat</td>
<td>Phillipines Department of Environment and Natural Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Van Slooten, Mr. Robert</td>
<td>Economist, Chair, UNEP Economic Options Committee</td>
<td>United Kingdom Department of Trade and Industry</td>
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