



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE OZONE LAYER

16 September 2001



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The battle to repair the ozone layer -- the Earth's protective shield, which filters out harmful levels of sunlight -- has been a positive example for all people and nations who care about preserving the fragile global environment.

The threat posed by the use of certain chemicals was first recognized some 30 years ago, and has been vigorously addressed by governments, scientists, industries, consumers and multilateral organizations, including the United Nations. Meaningful agreements have been reached, and alternative chemicals have been introduced for use in everything from fire-fighting to aerosol cans. If governments continue to implement the provisions of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its Amendments, the ozone layer is expected to recover its pre-1980 state by 2050.

However, this is not a foregone conclusion. There is a thriving illegal trade in ozone-damaging substances and other products controlled by the Montreal Protocol. Moreover, new ozone-depleting substances are being developed and marketed that are currently outside the Protocol's control. Such activities must be addressed if we are to guarantee the ozone layer's full repair and recovery.

Experience with the ozone layer suggests that the international community can indeed summon the resources, creativity and political will to address major environmental threats. As we remain vigilant about threats to the ozone layer, let us also address ourselves to the long list of other threats awaiting similar attention.

[Back to the Press Releases page](#)

