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**New substances, illegal trade threatens recovery of ozone layer  
Asian countries phase out on target  
United Nations Environment Programme Urges Vigilance**

International Ozone Day on Sunday, September 16

Bangkok, September 15, 2001 - A range of new chemicals, used in everything from fire extinguishers to cleaning fluids, are appearing on the market to the concern of scientists studying the ozone layer.

The new substances, with names such as n-propyl bromide and halon-1202, are not controlled by the Montreal Protocol which lists ozone-depleting substances that are to be phased out.

Studies indicate that some of the new substances, which are being used as replacements for banned ones, may have the potential to damage the ozone layer. This protective layer is located in the stratosphere where it shields life on Earth from high levels of cancer-causing ultra violet light.

The quantities being manufactured are at the moment believed to be small. But scientists at universities and institutes around the globe, along with researchers at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), are concerned that over the coming years they may be produced in ever increasing quantities.

UNEP has estimated that the ozone layer and the ozone hole over Antarctica, which so far this September is extending over 24 million square kilometers or an area about the size of North America, will recover by 2050. This is as a result of the banning and phasing out of existing, long lived, ozone depleting chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). These were widely used in products such as hair sprays until they were outlawed by the Montreal Protocol.

But the emergence of these new chemicals has triggered concern that this recovery date may be significantly delayed.

Klaus Toepfer, the Executive Director of UNEP, said: "The Montreal Protocol has been a success story of which we can all be proud. Ninety-six ozone damaging chemicals have been banned or are being phased out and 1.3 billion US dollars have so far been contributed by developed countries to the Multilateral Fund to help developing countries implement the Protocol."

The fund was set up in the early 1990s to provide support to developing countries to help them phase out listed substances.

"But we must remain vigilant if our success story is to ultimately have a happy ending. Some of these new, replacement chemicals, may prove to be no threat at all to the ozone layer although they may pose threats to human health, wildlife and the environment generally. Others however may have the potential to cause significant damage to stratospheric ozone, undermining our efforts to date. I would urge countries to carry out immediate scientific assessments of these new chemicals and to ban those that are shown to have real ozone-depleting potential. Finally governments, industry and organizations like UNEP must, based on sound science, work together to devise a long term strategy so that we know in advance the ozone depleting potential of future chemicals before they appear on the market," he said.

Another challenge is the smuggling of ozone depleting substances, which UNEP believes is thriving. A report in the Japan Times last month said more than 100,000 bottles of CFC-12, have been circulating in Japan.

The chemical, which was banned in industrialized countries in 1996, is used in car air conditioning units. It is likely that the chemical was illegally imported from countries where production of CFC-12 is still permitted under the Protocol's phase-out timetable, such as India and China.

To help address this threat, UNEP's ozone network coordinators based in Bangkok have strengthened collaboration between customs officials and national ozone officers throughout the region, in order to detect and prosecute illegal trading activity.

Thanavat Junchaya, UNEP ozone network coordinator for South East Asia and the Pacific, said Asian countries have a crucial role to play in international efforts to protect the ozone layer.

"With the production and use of ozone depleting substances almost halted in industrialised countries, it is now our turn to phase out the use of CFCs by 2010, the deadline agreed under the Montreal Protocol."

The latest analysis of production and consumption trends, completed by UNEP in June 2001, shows 90 percent of Asian countries reached their first CFC freeze commitment and are likely to achieve their next target of a 50 percent reduction in use by 2005.

The awareness-raising activities involving thousands of people for International Ozone Day this Sunday is an important part of helping us reach this goal, said Mr Junchaya.

Children's essay and painting competitions, production of banners, stickers and brochures, seminars by Government and industry, and screenings of entries into UNEP's ozone video competition are some of the activities being planned in Bangladesh, India, China, Iran, The Maldives, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

In his message for the day, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, said "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."

END

**For more on activities and issues linked with International Ozone Day in Asia**

**please contact:** Thanavat Junchaya, South East Asia and Pacific Ozone Network Coordinator, tel 2882128 or 01 339 0440; Ludgarde Coppens, South Asia Ozone Network Coordinator, tel 2881679; or Tim Higham, Regional Information Officer, UNEP/ROAP, Bangkok, phone (662) 288 2127, [higham.unescap@un.org](mailto:higham.unescap@un.org);

For more detailed information on the threats posed by the new ozone-depleting substances please see UNEP News release 01/96 available at [http://www.unep.org/ozone/ozone\\_day2001/](http://www.unep.org/ozone/ozone_day2001/) Background information and other resources are also available on this site.

**Background:**

International Ozone Day is an annual event that takes place on September 16. This year's slogan is Save O3ur Sky:Protect Yourself Protect the Ozone Layer.

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer is the international environmental agreement that has galvanized global co-operation to protect the stratospheric ozone layer.

The Protocol was signed by 46 countries in 1987 and has been ratified by 175 Parties to the Protocol.

Under the agreement, countries have committed to a precise schedule for reducing and eventually phasing out their consumption and production of ozone depleting substances (ODS). A number of ozone-depleting substances (chlorofluorocarbons, carbon tetrachloride, methyl chloroform and halons) have already been phased out in developed countries, except for about 10,000 tonnes used as essential uses.

The first major milestone for developing countries (Article 5 countries) was the "freeze" of Annex A CFCs (CFC-11, -12, -113, -114, -115) at the 1995-1997 average levels, which came into

effect on 1 July 1999. After this date, Article 5 countries must reduce these substances 50% by 2005, 85% by 2007 and 100% by 2010. Governments and industry in Article 5 countries are meeting this challenge through a combination of means, including public awareness campaigns, setting conducive policies and incentives, implementing investment projects, and non-investment activities such as training, information exchange, and experience-sharing.

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