

Information release
Developing Countries Gear Up for a Seamless Transition
CFC-free Inhalers for Asthma Patients

Geneva, 18 July 2009. The United Nations Environment Programme launched the Transition to CFC-free inhalers Awareness Package for National Ozone Units (NOUs) in developing countries during the Open-Ended Working Group of the Parties of the Montreal Protocol to assist NOUs in Article 5 countries raising awareness on CFC MDI phase out and facilitating seamless transition to CFC-free inhalers in their countries. Some CFC productions and consumptions will continue after 2010 phase out deadline for the essential use of CFC-based MDI in certain countries, therefore the package has been developed in a way to make it contextual to the situation of all countries.

Worldwide, there are about 300 million people with asthma and over 210 million with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). As inhalers are the best way to treat these conditions and as the use of inhalers is increasing throughout the world, a lot of effort went into the development of inhalers in the past. CFCs were used in manufacturing of inhalers. In line with the global commitment to phase out CFCs under the Montreal Protocol, research and development efforts for CFC free inhalers were undertaken and CFC-free options for addressing asthma and COPD were developed. It has taken more than 20 years of research and expenditure of about US\$2 billion to develop the CFC-free metered dose inhalers.

As a part of the transition process to CFC-free inhalers, health professionals in all countries are being urged to move their patients onto new CFC-free asthma and COPD inhalers at the earliest as all countries enter the final stages of withdrawal of CFC-containing metered dose inhalers. It is important to begin the medication transition now to ensure that all people with asthma or COPD have ongoing access to their medications and can use the CFC-free inhalers competently. Soon all asthma and COPD inhalers available in the market will be either dry powder or will use a hydrofluoroalkane (HFA) propellant. It is important to note that, these inhalers provide the same health benefits as the old CFC-containing inhalers without damaging the ozone layer.

Now is the time to educate patients and ensure they know how to use, clean and care for their new inhalers. Patients using dry powder inhalers will also benefit from this education. It's also a good opportunity to review patients' asthma and COPD treatment and make sure they have their conditions under control.

This MDI awareness package has been developed with the expectation that the NOUs in developing countries, in cooperation with health sector stakeholders will use them. In line with their national requirement, they can adapt, translate and outreach the package within their country.

The resources in the package which have been created for use in different occasions include Information statement for health professionals, Consumer brochure for patients, PowerPoint presentation for health industry, Draft letter to authorities, Draft press release for health industry media, Draft press release for general consumer media, Draft radio announcement script and Draft question and answer sheet. These resources provide details of the scientific basis for the efficacy and safety of the CFC-free inhalers, explain the changes for patients with asthma and COPD, and provide key messages about the transition to CFC-free inhalers for specific groups, such as national or regional authorities, stakeholder groups, media outlets and the general public. They will be available for download on the UNEP DTIE OzonAction website shortly.

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Notes to Editors:

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP is the United Nations system's designated entity for addressing environmental issues at the global and regional level. Its mandate is to coordinate the development of environmental policy consensus by keeping the global environment under review and bringing emerging issues to the attention of governments and the international community for action.

Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer is an international treaty designated to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production and consumption of a number of substances believed to be responsible for ozone depletion. The treaty was opened for signature on September 16, 1987 and entered into force on January 1, 1989. Since then, it has undergone five revisions, in 1990 (London), 1992 (Copenhagen), 1995 (Vienna), 1997 (Montreal), and 1999 (Beijing). Due to its widespread adoption and implementation it has been hailed as an example of exceptional international cooperation, "Perhaps the single most successful international agreement to date..."

About UNEP's OzonAction

The Montreal Protocol is at an advanced stage of implementation. Developing countries now operate under a "compliance phase" which requires them to achieve and sustain compliance with specific obligations, promote a greater sense of country ownership and implement the agreed Executive Committee framework for strategic planning.

As an Implementing Agency of the Protocol's Multilateral Fund, UNEP responded to this new compliance context by changing its mode of operation and structure to better assist developing countries with the implementation of the treaty. UNEP's OzonAction Programme established a Compliance Assistance Programme (CAP) that moved from a project management approach to directly assisting countries with specific compliance challenges. The CAP is delivered through specialized staff located in four of UNEP's Regional Offices and in the Paris office of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE).

Consistent with the above approach **the CAP team in the Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ROAP)** has developed to be the centre for policy advice, compliance guidance and conduct training to refrigeration technicians, customs officers and other relevant stakeholders on compliance issues, promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation and promote high-level awareness by utilizing UNEP's staff.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

UNEP OzonAction Programme: www.unep.fr/ozonaction

Multilateral Fund: www.multilateralfund.org

Ozone Secretariat: www.ozone.unep.org