

Sealing the Hole and Sealing the Deal: Resolve of African Countries 135 days Before 2010 Deadline for Total Phase out of CFCs

Confirming the success story as 100% African countries are set to meet the deadline

Abuja/Nairobi, 20 August 2009- Representatives of 39 African Countries, gathered in ‘rock’ city of Abuja in Nigeria to make final maneuvers and set sails towards finishing line of 1st January 2010, when consumption of CFCs and Halons will be assigned to history books.

The 13th ODS Officers Network (ODSONET) joint meeting held in Abuja, Nigeria, was organized by UNEP Compliance assistance Programme in Africa, in collaboration with the government of Nigeria.

The ODSONET meeting, which was also attended by African environmental journalists, is the last regional meeting before the critical conference in Copenhagen where the world is expected to make a deal on a new climate regime and the 2010 deadline for the total phase out of Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

Just about 135 days to go to get to the finishing line for CFCs and Halons set for 1st January 2010. African countries get ready to gain climate advantage from the Montreal Protocol.

National Ozone Unit and Climate Change Unit of Nigeria resolved to work together to benefit from dual benefit of protecting ozone layer and reducing the impact of climate change as they symbolically joined hands to stamp the Seal the Deal petition, as part of the UN global campaign calling for a fair, balanced and effective climate agreement in Copenhagen in December this year.

The Federal Minister of Environment of Nigeria, Mr. John Ode said: “Nigeria has been an active participant in the crusade against ODS and we would pursue close cooperation between climate and ozone office. This would be our important resolve during this meeting. While setting our sails to sealing the hole, we have historic opportunity to seal the deal at Copenhagen.”

The path towards sealing the hole is now set. The countries are now planning to sustain the phase out to ensure that consumption of these Ozone Depleting substances does not resume in illegal manner.

The Head of Paris-based UNEP OzonAction Branch, Rajendra Shende said: “Africa is the continent of multitude of challenges and diverse opportunities. Having successfully faced the challenge of CFC phase out for last two decades, now the countries in Africa stand to gain significantly over next two decades from the opportunity of phase out of Hydro chlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), which is ozone depleting gas though only 5 % as harmful as CFCs”

HCFCs are 2000 times more powerful Greenhouse gas as compared to the carbon dioxide (CO₂). Hence, while air conditioning is needed for Africa’s development, there is need to deploy the climate friendly and Ozone friendly alternatives that are already available.

The Abuja meeting provided a platform for Ozone Officers to examine common problems and challenges, compare note on the measures taken in the past years, draw the lessons learnt in a few specific case still needing readjustment and foster regional collaboration towards meeting countries’ binding obligations.

Significant progress has been made, with regard to the reduction of ODS in the African region namely CFCs and Halons as well as methyl bromide in the in run up to the 21st Meeting of the

Parties to the Montreal Protocol, which will be held in Port Ghalib, Egypt, from 4-8 November 2009.

The Montreal Protocol is still ongoing beyond the 2010 phase out targets, and other substances remain to be phased out. In this regard, Africa is faced with challenges relating to the phase out of HCFCs, methyl bromide, black market trading in ODS, destruction of ODS banks and coping with the request for critical use exemptions.

The need to convey the sense of urgency and to accelerate the phase- out of HCFCs in order to protect the earth's ozone layer and minimize impacts on the earth's climate, together with the need to enhance visibility for the Ozone activities in the region have also made it necessary to bring a new perspective in communication and outreach programme delivery in Africa.

The African Network of Environment Journalists (ANEJ) has developed a plan to help build a strong interest and partnership for the Ozone agenda in the region. The plan draws on the benefits yielded so far and better engagement of strategic and priority target groups in the work of the CAP team in Africa. This plan will be implemented in all African countries, in collaboration with National Ozone offices, partners and the UNEP Compliance assistance Programme (CAP).

Note to Editors

The HCFCs mainly used in room air conditioning and commercial building air conditioning is growing at the rate more than 20 % in Africa mainly in cities.

About the ODS deadlines

The Montreal Protocol has set a time limit for the consumption and production of different ODS. For developed countries, most of the deadlines of total phase-out have been already met in the 1990s except for HCFCs, methyl bromide and some essential uses.

Developing countries have been given more time to find replacement products and methods and most have their phase out deadlines fixed for between 2010 (CFCs and Halons), 2015 (Methyl Bromide) and 2030 (HCFCs- with a service tail of 2.5% between 2030 and 2040).

At the meeting of Parties of the Montreal Protocol in September 2007, it was decided to accelerate the phase-out of production of HCFCs in developed and developing countries and reduce progressively the consumption of HCFCs in developing countries.

The Montreal Protocol required countries to start freeze the consumption of HCFCs by 1st January, 2013. Some countries have already started restricting the importation of HCFCs to enable them meet the 2013 target.

Methyl Bromide: One of the major challenges in the reduction of methyl bromide in the region is the sustainability in the phase-out. There is a need for local technical capacity development to avoid over-reliance on foreign experts for MB alternative technologies. Africa has too few local experts for sustaining the rapid adoption of MB alternative technologies.

For More Information Please Contact: Nick Nuttall, UNEP Spokesperson, Office of the Executive Director, on Tel: +254 20 762 3084; Mobile: +254 733 632 755, E-mail: Nick.Nuttall@unep.org or Angele Luh-Sy, Regional Information Officer, on Tel: 254 20 762 4292, Mobile: 254 722 429 770, E-mail: Angele.Luh@unep.org