



Four Asian countries pull together to combat cross-border illegal trade in Ozone Depleting Chemicals

Chalsa/ Bangkok, 7 April 2010- Thirty representatives from the National Ozone Offices and Customs administrations from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal came together today to forge an alliance to tackle illegal trade in chemicals which destroy the earth's protective ozone layer and contribute to climate change. The cooperation was initiated at *The Border Dialogue on Monitoring and Controlling Trade in Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS)* taking place over the next two days in Chalsa, West Bengal, India.

All countries have committed to reduce consumption and production of ODS under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, notably chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) and halons, the production of which was terminated globally on the 1st January this year. However, these chemicals exist in the region because significant amounts of CFC-dependent refrigerators, air conditioners and other equipments are still in service. Although alternatives are available to service such equipment, the cost and incompatibility of some replacements can lead some users to seek out illicit supplies of the CFCs. The smuggling of these chemicals to satisfy this demand has posed significant challenges to border enforcement personnel.

“Due to the 2010 CFC phase-out, unscrupulous traders may try to challenge ban in the coming months recognising the potentially huge profit and often low risk from this illegal trade. To address these issues, UNEP has been actively promoting border dialogues among neighbouring countries and assisted in raising awareness, enhancing enforcement capacity and optimizing mechanisms for coordination at border crossings” said Mr. Atul Bagai, of UNEP's OzonAction Programme.

“Unified international efforts will be the key to the prevention of the environmental crime related to ODS smuggling” said Mr. Anil Bhatnagar, Director General, National Academy of Customs, Excise and Narcotics, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

Following the one-day regional dialogue, a capacity building training will be held for the participating customs and enforcement officers in order to enhance their knowledge and skills in identifying and handling ODS.

“Solving the crisis of illegal ODS trade and minimizing its negative economic and industrial consequences require close cooperation among nations as well as collaborative industry partnership” said Mr. B.P Nilaratna, Joint Secretary of Ministry of Environment and Forests, India.

Dr. Sita Ram Joshi, Director General, Nepal Bureau of Standards and Metrology said “This dialogue will increase cross-border cooperation among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, as well as encourage the development and the adoption of sub-regional solutions to monitor ODS traffic. It will certainly support the ODS phase-out programmes in this sub-region”.

Representatives from the World Customs Organization's Regional Intelligence Office for Asia and the Pacific (RILO A/P); the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); India's National Academy of Customs, Excise and Narcotics (NACEN); Department of Border Management of the Ministry of Home Affairs, India; INTERPOL India; Border Security Force and SSB India will share their expertise and experiences in environmental crime at this important meeting.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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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 designed 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 the Compliance Assistance Programme (CAP) of UNEP DTIE

UNEP as an Implementing Agency of the Multilateral Fund of the Montreal Protocol has a unique regionalized programme that delivers compliance assistance services to countries to assist them meet the international commitments under the Protocol. The compliance regime requires countries to: achieve and sustain compliance, promote a greater sense of country ownership and implement the agreed Executive Committee framework for strategic planning.

UNEP through the Compliance Assistance Programme (CAP) has moved from project management approach to a direct implementation initiative through its specialized staff. Consistent with the above approach the Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ROAP) CAP team 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.

OzonAction Programme: www.unep.fr/ozonaction

Multilateral Fund: www.multilateralfund.org

Ozone Secretariat: www.ozone.unep.org