Montreal Protocol

Measures to Strengthen the Work

Ministers and government experts from over 100 countries met in Cairo, Egypt, on 23–24 November 1998, for the Tenth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

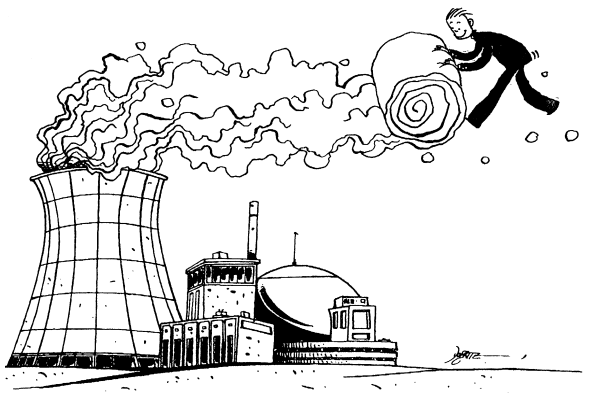
Associated meetings of the Working Group and the Executive Committee of the Multilateral Fund preceded the Meeting of the Parties.

The Cairo Meeting took place just two weeks after scientists reported the largest Antarctic ozone "hole" ever recorded – equal to an area of 26 million square kilometres, or more than 25 times the size of the host country.

For the first time, the Parties tackled the challenge of how to make policies to protect the ozone layer consistent with ongoing efforts to reduce emissions of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change. Several gases that are being used as ozone-safe replacements for chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), contribute to global warming and so are targeted for reduction under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

Another link is that scientists think global warming may slow the ozone layer's healing process, because they believe that the warming of the atmosphere near the ground will cause the stratosphere to become even colder.

Based on a recommendation by its Working Group in July 1998, the Meeting of the Parties agreed on a process



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for coordinating the work of the scientific and technology and economic assessment panels on ozone with similar panels and committees linked to the Climate Change Convention.

In his opening address to the Meeting, Klaus Töpfer, UNEP's Executive Director, said that "For the first time we are seeing the emergence of an integrated approach to the global atmosphere. We need to ensure that the scientific and policy responses underlying the two most important agreements on the global atmosphere – the Montreal Protocol and the Kyoto Protocol – are mutually supportive and fully coordinated."

A key outcome from the Cairo meeting are the strengthened measures to close down CFC production facilities. In a related meeting the week before, the Executive Committee of the Multilateral Fund noted the completion of a technical audit of production facilities for ozone-depleting substances in China and India. The Committee will shortly promote new projects to start phasing out such production facilities.

Also, just before the Meeting of the Parties (MOP), ten donors pledged a special contribution of $19 million to shut down Russian CFC and halon production factories by the year 2000.

The MOP also reviewed the problem of non-compliance with the Montreal Protocol on the part of eight countries. Members of the former Soviet Union have been unable to meet their phase-out schedules due to their recent transition to market economies. The Parties recommended that the Global Environment Facility continue to assist these countries while cautioning them that stricter measures will be imposed if they do not adhere to their new benchmarks for phase-out.

The Protocol is faced by the challenge that a number of new substances (namely Chlorobromomethane, n-propyl-bromide and Halon-1202), have the potential to be marketed as replacements for stronger ozone-depleting substances controlled under the Protocol even though they themselves have some ozone-depleting potential.

The Meeting asked its Technology and Economic Assessment Panel (TEAP), Science Assessment Panel, and Legal Drafting Group, to explore this issue and report back in 1999 on how to prevent such new substances from being marketed in future.

While atmospheric concentrations of CFCs have started to decline as a result of emission controls, concentrations of halons have continued to increase due to halons' long atmospheric lifetime and releases from fire extinguishers. The Meeting therefore recommended the adoption of national management strategies for reducing halon emissions.

New measures to limit the export of new and used products and equipment that require CFCs or other controlled substances (for example, refrigerators), were advocated. In this respect, the Parties recommended that each country identify the items it does not want to be imported. A list of these will be maintained by the Secretariat and communicated to all Parties on a regular basis. (MJ) ❐

(*See also previous article.*)

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