



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement

Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente

Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

联合国环境规划署



Afghanistan and UNEP from partnership against smuggling of ozone depleting chemicals

Bangkok, 23 March 2010 – Today an important partnership was forged to combat the illegal trade in chemicals which destroy the earth's protective ozone layer and contribute to climate change. The partnership was cemented through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the United Nations Environment Programme, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (UNEP DTIE) OzonAction Programme, Afghanistan's National Environment Protection Agency (NEPA) and Afghanistan's Customs Department of the Ministry of Finance (ACD) at a ceremony held today at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Bangkok, Thailand.

Afghanistan is facing an unprecedented challenge in relation to illegal trade and security. The smuggling of environmentally sensitive commodities such as ozone depleting chemicals can undermine the efforts of a country to protect the environment. Today's agreement establishes a framework for collaboration on customs training and capacity building initiatives for customs officers in Afghanistan. The partnership will contribute to strengthening environmental security in the country and enable ozone issues to be mainstreamed in Afghanistan's capacity building efforts.

"Despite the difficult and challenging situation in the country, Afghanistan has so far succeeded in achieving compliance with the Montreal Protocol that Deplete the Ozone Layer through its determined efforts to phase out ozone depleting substances (ODS). Monitoring the cross border trade in ODS has been the key success factor in accomplishing this" said Rajendra Shende, Head of UNEP DTIE OzonAction Programme. "Today Afghanistan has demonstrated to the world its determination to protect the ozone layer and has stepped up its efforts to prevent the illegal trade in ODS. UNEP will stand shoulder to shoulder and support Afghanistan in all these efforts", Mr Shende continued.

"ACD launched a Customs Academy in Kabul in January 2010. With the objective of improving and modernising the customs service, we are proud and ready to be part of this ozone capacity building initiative by developing a relevant training curriculum and monitoring the training courses, as well as collecting information on ODS seizures and illegal ODS trends" said Mr. Said Mobin Shah, Deputy Minister of Customs and Revenue, ACD.

"NEPA is expected to play a major role in environmental protection, especially in ozone layer protection. One of our key roles is to provide training to customs officers, including providing training materials tailored for Afghanistan, as well as information on the latest developments of the Montreal Protocol and other technical support related to ozone issues" said Mr. Mostapha Zaher, Director General of NEPA.

Porous land borders with neighbouring countries provide the major routes for the illegal ODS trade. In an effort to promote actions to curb illegal trade in these chemicals, UNEP DTIE OzonAction Programme has been facilitating border dialogue consultations between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries to discuss mechanisms to jointly address illegal trade issues. Following the ceremony today UNEP DTIE OzonAction Programme have organised a meeting between Afghanistan's National Ozone Officer, NEPA, ACD, and experts from India, Iran and UNEP to discuss the challenges of control and monitoring of ODS, and relevant issues common to Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries.

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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.

Afghanistan's National Environment Protection Agency

NEPA serves as Afghanistan's environmental policy-making and regulatory institution. Its role is to regulate, coordinate, monitor and enforce environmental laws.

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 regionalised 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 utilising UNEP's staff.

MEA-REN Project

The project aims at initiating an integrated regional cooperation between countries in North East, South and South East Asia that will enable the participating countries to gain better control over their import and export of chemicals (ODS, POPs, chemical waste) by promoting further regional co-operation for the control of trans-boundary movement of those chemicals.

UNEP DTIE OzonAction Programme: www.unep.fr/ozonaction

Multilateral Fund: www.multilateralfund.org

Ozone Secretariat: www.ozone.unep.org

MEA-REN: www.mea-ren.org