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PRESS RELEASE

The Montreal Protocol and the Kyoto Protocol mutually supportive say top UN officials

(Montreal, 17 September 2007) – International efforts to safeguard Earth's climate and protect the ozone layer are mutually supportive, say the United Nations top climate change and environment officials. Negotiations on the future direction of the Montreal Protocol in protecting the ozone layer, which start in Montreal today, and the UN Climate Change Conference set for Bali in December will shape further climate action beyond 2012, when the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol ends.

"The Montreal Protocol is successfully assisting in the repair and recovery of the ozone layer. The Kyoto Protocol is tackling perhaps the greatest challenge of our generation – climate change. However, what is also emerging in 2007, and emerging with ever greater clarity, is that both treaties are mutually supportive across several key fronts," said Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The Kyoto Protocol's clean development mechanism (CDM) has led to the destruction of large volumes of the very potent greenhouse gas HFC-23, a by-product of the production of the coolant HCFC-22, and is currently the only reliable mechanism available to prevent emissions of this gas in the short term, according to a new report by the Technology and Economic Assessment Panel (TEAP) of the Montreal Protocol to be released in Montreal this week.

"The Kyoto Protocol's CDM is assisting to destroy HFCs. Meanwhile, governments here in Montreal look set to back an accelerated freeze and phase-out of HCFCs, with important benefits for the ozone layer and also for climate change," Mr. Steiner added.

"This kind of cooperation underlines the importance of the UN and its related environmental agreements, demonstrating in clear and concrete terms how, by combining their strengths, they can more efficiently and cost effectively realize the sustainability goals of our time," said Mr. Steiner.

Parties to the Kyoto Protocol decided in Montreal in 2005 that the CDM should not lead to an increase in HCFC-22, a gas regulated by the Montreal Protocol.

"The Parties to the Kyoto Protocol have been guided by the dual objective of safeguarding the climate and protecting the ozone layer when shaping climate action. This dual objective has also guided the regulation applied to the generation of CDM carbon market credits from the destruction of HFC-23 in older refrigerant factories. New plants and expanded production do not qualify under the CDM," said Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Parties to the Kyoto Protocol will consider in Bali in December if and then how the CDM could also provide incentives for the destruction of HFC-23 in new plants, without stimulating production of the refrigerant HCFC-22, and will take the findings of the TEAP report into account.

"The worst of all cases would be for HFC-23 emissions to go unmitigated," according to the TEAP report.

"Steps to accelerate the phase-out of HCFCs under the Montreal Protocol would make a significant contribution to the global effort to address climate change. The potential in this area is very encouraging and, when combined with significant opportunities to reduce emissions from other sectors, such as energy, buildings and deforestation, demonstrates that solutions to the climate threat are available. The Bali conference needs to put in motion a global campaign to capture all of these opportunities and the Montreal Protocol can continue to make a contribution, building on its past successes," said Mr. de Boer.

About the UNFCCC

With 191 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership. It is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which has to date 175 member Parties. Under the Protocol, 36 States, consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries undergoing transition to a market economy, have legally binding greenhouse gas (GHG) emission limitation and reduction commitments, while developing countries have non-binding obligations to limit emissions. The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilize GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

About the CDM

There are currently more than 780 registered CDM projects in 48 countries, and about another 1320 projects in the project registration pipeline. The CDM is expected to generate more than 2.2 billion certified emission reductions (tradable CERs) by the time the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012, each equivalent to one tonne of carbon dioxide.

About UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been the voice for the environment in the UN system since 1972. It is an advocate, educator, catalyst and facilitator, promoting the wise use of the planet's natural assets for sustainable development. It also plays a key role in a broad range of activities and awareness campaigns related to climate change, with many partners including national governments, youth organizations, business, industry and the media. UNEP's capacity-building activities related to CDM include regional awareness and information programmes in Africa and Asia.

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