

ENVIRONMENT MINISTER DR. SHAKEELA CALLS PARTIES TO THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL NOT TO GIVE A BLIND EYE TO THE INHERENT LINK BETWEEN OZONE PROTECTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE



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Speaking at the high level segment of the 24th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol Environment Minister Dr. Shakeela urged Parties not to give a blind eye to the inherent link between the ozone layer protection and climate change. She said “I urge those who are blind to the inherent link between ozone protection and climate change, not to turn the Montreal Protocol, to a vehicle that promotes HFCs on the premise that other UN Conventions will take care of the problem we have created here. That would be the height of irresponsibility” Minister said.

Expressing concern on the increase in the use of HFCs, which is a highly potent global warming gas according to scientists, as a replacement for HCFCs, Minister questioned, “Please tell me ladies and gentleman, is our ultimate goal not environmental protection and global safety? If so, what is the bright idea of stopping ozone layer depletion in the name of saving the earth when that very same act is contributing to the degradation of the global climate systems and ultimately destroy the earth that we are trying to save?”, and she further went on to say that, “We as responsible people should not let our actions lead to the degradation of the global climate systems”.

Addressing on the issue of some countries reluctance to address the climate change impacts of ozone friendly gases being promoted under the Protocol as a replacement to ODSs, Minister said that it was revoltingly shocking to hear some countries say, that this

was not the right forum to address this issue. Minister said, “for countries like Maldives, who are on the front line of climate change impacts, every forum is a right forum. We have no choice. No time to spare. So please do not say that this is not the right forum to address what impacts global warming when actions that are promoted in this very forum has negative impacts on climate change affecting lives and livelihood. It is morally wrong not to acknowledge it and address it”.

Minister urged all Parties to the Montreal Protocol to work together to find a solution to this looming problem and called Parties to take rapid steps that would facilitate the provision of information and cost effective and climate friendly alternatives to HCFCs.

In her statement Minister also underscored some of the significant achievements the Maldives made under the Protocol. In this regard Minister highlighted that the Maldives was the first country in the world to successfully phase out CFCs, two years ahead of the Montreal Protocol target and have now committed to become the first country in the world to phase out HCFCs by 2020, ten years ahead of the Montreal Protocol phase-out schedule. Minister also announced the intent of the Maldivian government to start banning of the import of HCFC based equipment beginning June 5th, 2014 into the Maldives.

Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, is dedicated to the protection of the earth's ozone layer. With 197 parties, it is the most widely ratified treaty in United Nations history, and have, to date, enabled reductions of over 97% of all global consumption of controlled ozone depleting substances. The Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol (MOP) takes place once a year around November. This is where decisions are normally discussed and approved by the Parties. The meeting of the Parties was preceded by the preparatory segment which took place from 12-14 November 2012 in Geneva. A seminar was also held on Sunday 11 November, in honour of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Montreal Protocol. Maldives became a Party to the Montreal Protocol in 1989.