

**THEMATIC MEETING ON IMPLEMENTATION OF
HCFC PHASE-OUT MANAGEMENT PLANS (HPMPs)
MINSK, BELARUS, 13-15 OCTOBER 2015**

MEDIA BRIEFING



Minsk, Belarus, 15 October 2015 – Countries with Economies in Transition and Article 5 countries joining hands to meet their respective reduction targets for ozone-depleting HCFCs: Montreal Protocol focal points and refrigeration & air-conditioning (RAC) experts shared highlights, challenges and lessons learnt from the implementation of their respective HCFC phase-out strategies during the thematic meeting on the implementation of HCFC refrigerant management plans in Minsk, Belarus, 13-15 October 2015.

Georgia briefed the participants about their educational programme and training curricula for refrigeration experts which consists of 13 modules which are taught during a period of 18 months. Trainees receive certificates or diploma once they obtained sufficient number of credits.

Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joined the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in 2015 and they are currently harmonizing their legislation for ozone-depleting substances with that of the EEU including trade restrictions and import bans for HCFC equipment and products. Kyrgyzstan also banned the import of disposable cylinders and aims to phase-out their

HCFC consumption by 2020 (with a 2,5% service tail until 2013) – 10 years earlier as normally required by the Montreal Protocol in developing countries.

Georgia also informed about their pilot system for ODS destruction using plasma technology. However, this system is not suited for destruction of actual quantities of ODS waste. Therefore, Georgia had exported 1,5 tons of ODS waste to France for destruction..

Armenia has collected 0,5 tons of ODS waste and is looking for appropriate disposal options. They would be interested in a list of countries with destruction facilities which would allow the import of ODS for destruction. In addition, the provisions of the Basel Convention would need to be respected.

Kyrgyzstan established an agreement with the customs training center providing Montreal Protocol related training to customs officers on a monthly basis as part of the ongoing customs training curricula. In addition, the Ozone Center conducted the training of environmental inspectors. Since there are no border controls between the member countries of the EEU, the responsibility of monitoring trade within the EEU moved to the finance police. Therefore, the training of finance police officers will become a priority in future.

Several countries highlighted the importance of close cooperation with national stakeholders and relevant Ministries including Environment, Education, Economy, Industry, Finance (Customs) etc. Some countries hold regular Steering Committee meetings with representatives of relevant Ministries and national stakeholders such as refrigeration & air-conditioning associations.

Moldova explained the downwards adjustment of its HCFC baseline which resulted into a reduced funding level for their HCFC phase-out management plan. Nevertheless, the efforts to harmonize the ODS legislation with the European Union regulations are going on, the number of imported HCFC equipment is decreasing and that of equipment using alternative refrigerants is rising.

Belarus is confident to meet the 90% reduction below their HCFC baseline consumption in 2015 partly due to their strengthened ODS legislation which introduced bans in the import of ODS equipment / products, import fees for ODS of USD 4.5 per kg, record-keeping for equipment with more than 3 kg refrigerant charge and higher penalties including fines up to USD 5000 and prison sentences up-to 12 years. The import of disposable refrigerant cylinders will be banned starting from 1 January 2016. The new ODS legislation was shared with the new members of the EEU – Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

The Belarussian RAC association “Microclimate & Cold” adjusted their approach to training refrigeration experts after having visited the training facility at Centro Study Galileo in Italy providing practical and theoretical training, assessment and certification under the European Union regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gases).

Azerbaijan completed a survey on ODS and alternatives in the foam sector in cooperation with GIZ and is expecting the approval of a project. At the same time, they are facing

challenges in terms of changes in staffing and there is no RAC association or vocational training school which could support the training of RAC experts.

Russia informed that the criminal code might be applied in case of ODS smuggling resulting into fines and prison sentences. The introduced new labelling and reporting requirements and highlighted the importance of the informal Prior Informed Consent (iPIC) system.

The participants visited the premises of the Belarussian refrigeration association “Microclimate & Cold” and got acquainted with their activities, publications, membership structure and statutes. Members of the associations agree to comply with the code of conduct of the association and participate in the voluntary certification for RAC companies. Such voluntary certification provide competitive advantage when participating in tenders. A mandatory 1-week training and certification is planned for RAC experts working in the building sector. The “Microclimate & Cold” magazine might evolve into an online publication with dedicated “Montreal Protocol” pages and be disseminated to interested experts in the ECA network countries.

Afterwards, the State Mechanics and Technology Vocational and Technical College of Belarus demonstrated their training and laboratory facilities equipped with practical work stations and recovery & recycling equipment recently purchased under the GEF-funded HCFC phase-out project. They are currently elaborating new training standards and curricula

Tajikistan intends to update their ODS legislation and recommended participants to visit the websites of the Ministry of Environment, the RAC association “Artificial Cold” and the technical college. They have a certification system for RAC experts in place and apply penalties in case they work without valid license.

Turkmenistan explained the downwards adjustment of their HCFC baseline which did not affect the funding level for their HCFC phase-out management plan. However, since their institutional strengthening (IS) projects has been incorporated into the HCFC phase-out management plan, the country is unlikely to benefit from the 25% increase in IS funding. A revised ODS legislation including bans on import / export of HCFC equipment has been submitted to Parliament for approval and close cooperation has been established with the national standardization committee. In addition, the National Ozone Unit is advising the organizers of the Asian Games in 2017 on how to avoid the installation of HCFC-systems. They also briefed the participants on the illegal imports of R11, R22 and R404a which were originating from China, Iran and Turkey. These cases might be nominated for the ECA Ozone Protection Award for Customs & Enforcement Officers.

Uzbekistan is also revising their ODS legislation and explained their regional approach to training RAC technicians. The trainers are travelling to the regions to conduct the decentralized training locally. They highlighted the importance of joined inspections by the environmental inspectors and the Ministry staff. The country also seized 1020.4 kg of illegally imported R12 which is currently stored at customs and awaiting destruction.

Ukraine informed about their cooperation with Belarus, Tajikistan and Centro Studi Galileo in Italy in terms of technicians training and their study tour to Belarus with customs officers. They expect to establish the recovery & recycling center by end of 2015. There has also been evidence of illegal imports of R22 air-conditioning (AC) systems which were mis-labelled as non-ODS such as R410a. In response, they improved their risk profiling system for import of AC systems.

For the first time, UNEP's branch on Sustainable Life Styles, Cities and Technologies presented the concept of public procurement policies to promote environmentally sound technologies. The objective of such policy is to develop criteria to evaluate tenders which go beyond the price and minimum quality requirements. The focus should be on the most important goods and services procured in the public sector and air-conditioning, foam insulation and fire-fighting systems in public buildings are relevant. Existing procurement systems need to be amended accordingly. It was agreed to include this topic in the agenda of future network meetings.

At the end of the meeting, the results of the survey on the priorities of the ECA network were presented and discussed. The participants confirmed that key priorities of the network include the annual network and thematic meetings and the continued involvement the RAC experts in selected network activities. Some countries emphasized that the cooperation with customs officers remains important.

The meeting was opened the Deputy Minister Mr. Igor Kachanovsky, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus who congratulated the participants to 30 years of successful implementation of the Vienna Convention. The representatives of UNDP and UNEP OzonAction welcomed the international participants and highlighted the importance of close cooperation, continued capacity building and the important role of the RAC associations in training & certification. The meeting has been organized as part of the work programme of UNEP's Regional Ozone Network for Europe & Central Asia in close cooperation with the Ministry, the Belarussian refrigeration association "Microclimate & Cold", UNDP and UNIDO.

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