

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE OZONE LAYER
16 September 2005**

In this historic year for the United Nations, it is worth reflecting on one of the undoubted success stories of international cooperation. Twenty years ago, governments signed the Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer -- the thin layer of gas that protects all life on Earth from the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation from space -- setting into motion a process of global collaboration that has seen significant progress in addressing a major threat to human and environmental health worldwide. The Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol exemplify the value of the United Nations in mobilizing and coordinating multilateral action to address global issues. Only through such action can we hope to meet the many challenges the world currently faces.

One of the keys to the effectiveness of the Montreal Protocol is the Multilateral Fund, founded 15 years ago. Based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, the Fund has supported activities worth more than \$1.5 billion, thereby helping more than 130 developing countries to achieve strict obligations under the Montreal Protocol to reduce their production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances. Moreover, the Fund has demonstrated vividly that, with appropriate support, all countries can play a significant role in solving global environmental problems.

I congratulate all 189 Parties to the Montreal Protocol for their commitment to environmental sustainability. To date, they have permanently eliminated more than 1.5 million tonnes of annual production of chemicals that destroy the ozone layer. That does not mean, however, that all the work has all been done, or that the results of ozone depletion have been totally corrected. Developing countries are only at the half-way point in many of their obligations, while in the developed countries a number of chemicals still need to be phased out.

Furthermore, because of the historic use of ozone-depleting compounds, the ozone layer has become thinner in most places in the world. It is essential that we remain alert to this hazard to avoid an increase in skin cancers, cataracts and other health threats. For this reason, the theme of this year's International Day is "Act Ozone Friendly -- Stay Sun Safe". If all citizens of the world follow these simple words, we can protect public health and accelerate the day when the ozone layer will be healed.