



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

AUG 30 1986

Dr. Ahmad Mattar
Minister of the Environment
Princess House
Alexandra Road, Singapore 0315

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Dear Dr. Mattar:

This past June, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) co-sponsored a conference on the Health and Environmental Effects of Ozone Modification and Climate Change. Over 300 policymakers and scientists from 19 nations participated in this week-long meeting.

I came away from the conference convinced that these potential changes to our atmosphere could significantly alter the global environment. Ozone depletion could cause large increases in skin cancers and cataracts, suppression of the human immune system, degradation of materials, increases in local and regional air pollution, and damage to crops and aquatic resources. Climate change could raise sea level, affect agricultural productivity, and influence human health.

Some progress has been made on the ozone layer issue. In March 1985, the Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer was adopted by over twenty nations at a Diplomatic Conference in Vienna. I am pleased to note that on August 12, 1986, President Reagan signed the Instrument of Ratification for U.S. accession to the Convention. The Convention provides for international cooperation on research, monitoring, and information exchange, and includes procedures for developing future agreements to limit emissions of ozone-depleting substances, such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

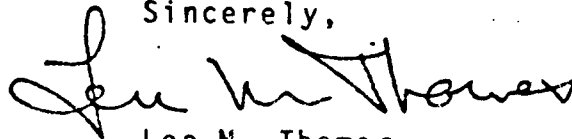
Over the past two years there has been a series of scientific meetings and economic workshops on this subject. One product of these analyses was an excellent synthesis of the current state of scientific understanding of the potential threat to the ozone layer, Atmospheric Ozone: Assessment of Our Understanding of the Processes Controlling its Present Distribution and Change. This landmark document, co-sponsored by several national and international organizations, was the result of over two years of scientific collaboration by approximately 150 scientists from around the world.

An experts group under the Ozone Convention is now scheduled by UNEP to convene December 1-5, 1986 in Geneva to decide on the feasibility of developing internationally-agreed regulations to protect the ozone layer. A further negotiating session is scheduled for January-February 1987, and a Diplomatic Conference is tentatively planned for April 1987, at which time we hope that the negotiations can be successfully concluded.

This is a complicated issue involving a realistic assessment of long-term risks against shorter term costs. Moreover, unlike many other environmental issues, depletion of the ozone layer is a uniquely global phenomenon. Therefore, a coordinated international approach is essential.

For these reasons I have placed protection of the stratospheric ozone layer high on my personal agenda for the coming year, and hope that you too will make it a priority. I would welcome your views on this subject, and look forward to consulting with you as the negotiations get underway.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lee M. Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "T".

Lee M. Thomas