



Statement
by H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi
Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International
Organizations at the High-Level Segment of the
24th Meeting of the States Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the
Ozone Layer

Geneva, 15 November 2012

Mr President,

The 25th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol is a good occasion to pause and look back at a the positive developments it brought about. Equally important remains the need to reflect on the future of this Protocol.

The ozone layer is a tiny and fragile, but very essential part of creation. The human family depends on creation to sustain its life. The progress that the international community has achieved thanks to this Protocol in recovering the ozone layer promises more advances for the future so the ozone layer soon can again be our strong protecting shield.

Besides, this Protocol helps also in the protection of climate in general as the phase-out of ozone depleting substances under this body has resulted in a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

While some important issues remain unresolved, a sense of responsibility for the next generations should prompt continued efforts. How can we manage to arrive at a clear and firm political will necessary to reach agreement on further measures that would efficiently address the urgent need for enhanced protection of creation as a whole?

Part of the answer is a strong cooperation between the Montreal Protocol and other multilateral environmental agreements and this can set new standards of successful cooperation between different Protocols. In such process it is vital to take into account the concerns of the poorer and more vulnerable countries and assist them to meet the challenges they face. The principle of common but differentiated responsibility leads in this direction and encourages common action. It is also required to ensure continued integrity on the part of the assessment panels responsible for providing independent and unbiased technical advice and recommendations to the Parties to the Protocol so they may take correct decisions.

Mr. President,

The human family is currently experiencing several crises, economic, nutritional, environmental, and social – all deeply interlinked. They oblige us to redesign our way, to establish new guidelines and to find new forms of engagement through discernment and creative thinking.

The topics discussed under environmental treaties in the past days are very closely linked with human rights issues. Increased ultra violet radiation as consequence of a depleted ozone layer can result in an increase of eye cataract, and yet access to medical treatment is not easy for poor people in developing countries where blindness causes not only social problems, but also high costs. Another example is forced migration due to sea level rising.

The latter issue is linked with greenhouse gases, not necessarily with ozone depleting substances. Seen, however, in a holistic approach it would be wise to use synergies by combining different instruments provided by all relevant Protocols thus contributing a more efficient approach to the pertinent issues.

Protection of creation in all its aspects is a duty of solidarity toward future generations and technical advances should be placed to the service of this basic value.

In this context, the Montreal Protocol is a good example. Civil society, local authorities and industry have joined together in the past 25 years with an impressive series of initiatives to phase out production and consumption of certain substances that deplete the ozone layer and this has been possible only due to the adoption of alternatives developed and introduced on a large scale, a clear example of successful synergies.

Technical solutions are necessary, but not sufficient. From the beginning, the Montreal Protocol laid focus on information, education, and the formation of a sense of responsibility in children and adults towards environmentally sound patterns of development and the stewardship of creation. This course is to be followed also in the years to come.

Mr President,

The Holy See is making significant efforts in environmental protection. It gives particular attention to promoting an education in environmental responsibility in a way that also seeks to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology. Worldwide, many Catholic educational institutions are engaged in promoting such a model of education. Moreover, Episcopal Conferences, Dioceses, parishes and faith-based NGOs have been devoted to advocacy and management of ecological programs for a number of years.

These efforts are targeting our lifestyles, as the current dominant models of consumption and production are often unsustainable from the point of view of social, environmental, economic and moral analysis. We must practice a lifestyle through which we can safeguard creation – soil, water and air – as a gift entrusted to everyone and the base and prerequisite for our life. Above all we must prevent mankind from destroying itself. The degradation of nature is like a mirror of the culture: when the human ecology is respected within society, the environmental ecology will benefit. The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself.

In his recent encyclical *Caritas in veritate* and in the *World Day of Peace Message 2010* Pope Benedict XVI addressed to all those involved in the environmental sector an inescapable question: how can we hope that future generations respect the natural environment when our educational and social systems as well as our laws do not help them to respect themselves?

Mr President,

Environment – notably ozone layer protection and related actions – entails a shared responsibility toward the entire human family, especially the poor and the future generations. There is an inseparable link between the protection of creation, education and an ethical approach to the economy and development. The Holy See hopes that a holistic approach will be shared by everyone and lead to the integral development of all persons, countries and creation itself.

Thank you, Mr President.