

The Milestone of Helsinki

STATEMENT BY
DR. MOSTAFA K. TOLBA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
TO
THE FIRST MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE
MONTREAL PROTOCOL

Helsinki, 5 May 1989

(Please Check Against Delivery)

Minister Barlund, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my pleasure and honour to bring this meeting to a close. Let me again express the sincere thanks of the United Nations Environment Programme -- and that of all delegates and observers -- to the Government of Finland, and to you, Minister Barlund, in hosting this meeting. Let me also congratulate the delegates of this assembly. Your determination, cooperation and patience during tough negotiations have secured this meeting as a milestone in global environmental protection. The Helsinki Declaration is a remarkable achievement.

Rarely have so many countries come so far so quickly. Who could have imagined the road from Montreal to Helsinki would be travelled so swiftly? Our journey has been quickened by recent scientific evidence. Stratospheric ozone is being destroyed at rate greater than previously thought. The public around the world is alarmed. They want action, not lip service. Hence, the urgency of these deliberations. An urgency that transformed words into deeds. Deeds that are focused, forceful and meaningful.

Two issues needed to be tackled at the beginning of this meeting. Both were of equal importance. The first -- the need to strengthen the Protocol -- to agree on the total phase out of chloroflourocarbons by the end of the century, if not sooner. The second ---the need to ensure the full partnership of developing countries in the Protocol, by defining ways and means of providing technical and financial assistance.

The 81 countries and the European Community and 29 organisations and industry representatives reached unanimous agreement on both points. Through your actions, CFCs will soon be things of the past. Developing countries will play a full role in making them a part of history. I am proud to say that we have gone further. The political will has been focused, which will bring about important amendments to the Protocol. Such amendments will seek the phasing out halons, and the control and reduction of other ozone-destroying substances -- particularly methyl chloroform and carbontetrachloride -- as soon as possible.

To achieve these goals, we have clarified crucial provisions in the Protocol, shedding light on terms of reference that were in need of exact definition for the last year and one half. We have agreed to establish an international funding mechanism. The modalities of the proposed international Fund will provide a clear methodology for developing countries to benefit from technology transfer, training and other forms of assistance. The working groups will recommend specific amendments to the Protocol later this year. But let me be very clear. We have not deferred action. We have reached unanimous agreement -- the burden to protect our ozone layer must be shared equally. Those countries least responsible for ozone layer destruction, and least able economically to forward solutions, deserve the full assistance of the industrialised nations. They will get such assistance.

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Minister Bärilund, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Four days ago, I said that the Protocol was unacceptable. Today, we have a renewed Protocol -- one whose scope reflects current scientific evidence. But let me caution you. Our efforts -- no matter how significant -- cannot stop here in Helsinki. Our work has just begun. CFCs are but one of several greenhouse gases that induce climate change and bring about the dreaded global warming. The determination that guided these meetings must now be marshalled towards a greater threat. We must confront global warming. Time is running out. UNEP is prepared to act. But we -- and our sister agency, the WMO -- need your commitment. I am confident the spirit of Helsinki will endure, and move us forward to safeguard the global environment.

I thank you all very much.