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Through its OzonAction Programme, UNEP has made a difference “on the ground” in developing countries in terms of delivering technical assistance through UNEP’s regional offices.

UNEP has substantial experience with delivering targeted capacity building services to developing countries under the Montreal Protocol, a mature Multilateral Environment Agreement (MEA) with over a decade of implementation experience. The Montreal Protocol on the Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (one of the chemical cluster MEAs) is on the road to success. We are still not there, but scientists have observed that the stratosphere is recovering in response to the efforts of the world community to implement this treaty. We should learn from that lesson and explore how we can apply those to other areas of our work, particularly now that we have in front of us the other similar chemical-related MEAs, for example Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions.

As one of the four implementing agencies of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, along with UNDP, UNIDO and the World Bank, UNEP provides capacity-building services that assist developing countries and Countries with Economies in Transition (CEITs) to achieve compliance with this MEA. Under this approach, international assistance is focused on strengthening national capacity to meet compliance targets of the Montreal Protocol.

The Approach of UNEP DTIE’s OzonAction Programme

Over the last decade, the UNEP DTIE OzonAction Programme has helped more than 100 developing countries in preparing their national implementation strategies and management plans, assisted with institutional strengthening projects, and provided regional networking of national focal points under this MEA. It has undertaken training in more than 80 countries targeted at key stakeholders ranging from policy makers to customs officers to refrigeration technicians and farmers. The result is more empowered, informed and effective focal points under this MEA, known as National Ozone Units (NOUs). That empowerment has enabled them to take informed action. In response to the changing needs and priorities of developing countries during the Montreal Protocol’s compliance period (which began in 1999), UNEP significantly reoriented its programme strategy and delivery mechanism. It moved away from a project by project and activity by activity approach to integrated programmatic approach. This is achieved by direct policy advice for implementation, using a team of professionals with appropriate skills and expertise.

Regional Delivery

Under this new approach, UNEP has regionalized the delivery of capacity building programmes and services by placing its Regional Offices at the forefront of project implementation. The majority of the CAP team is based in UNEP’s Regional Offices where they work closely with the countries on an ongoing basis. UNEP believes that this innovative approach may set a trend in supporting compliance with MEAs. We call this as regional delivery of the ‘Compliance Assistance Programme’ (CAP).

Institutional Strengthening & Networking

The institutional mechanisms and governance model of the Montreal Protocol are driving the capacity building process to support implementation of the treaty. UNEP has actively encouraged and invigorated such structure that now consists of the national focal point with institutional support in the form of finance and policy advice. UNEP developed a particularly innovative and dynamic mechanism to enhance the effectiveness of this institutional structure to assist developing countries: the Regional Networks of Ozone Officers. Financially supported by the Protocol’s Multilateral Fund and the Government of Sweden, these 'people' networks have strengthened the capacity of National

Ozone Units (NOUs) through a simple concept: getting focal points together, discussing common problems, and identifying solutions. Initiated first in Asia, now 143 developing countries are part of the Montreal Protocol's regional networking mechanism. It has helped improve their compliance with the treaty.

Innovative Mechanisms for Providing Technical Assistance

It is not only institutional mechanisms that sustain capacity building. The world is changing fast and capacity building methods must evolve to reflect current realities. On-line training, South-South Cooperation, Leveraging the expertise of NGOs, developing cross-cutting networks of centers of excellence and partnerships with institutions that have the specific expertise are innovative mechanisms that we are employing to achieve results.

South-South cooperation between China and DPR Korea helped DPR Korea to get into the mainstream of the implementation of the MEA like Montreal Protocol. We have about 20 other examples of similar South-South Cooperation.

Business to Business (B2B) web site- the first web site of its kind in UN system- has helped in minimizing production of new hazardous chemicals by encouraging the trade of the existing chemicals like Halons.

Leveraging NGO expertise: More than a dozen NGOs in developing countries have become partners with UNEP in creating farm-level awareness among farmers to avoid the use of toxic fumigants like Methyl Bromide.

A Bottom Up Approach

Our regional delivery has one more hidden advantage. It takes UNEP near to countries and helps us understand needs of the countries and gives us the opportunity to benefit from their wisdom and experiences. From such feedback we have now started another cost-effective activity called '*Green Customs*'. The customs training that we are undertaking to assist the developing countries under the Montreal Protocol is now being integrated to include training under the Basel Convention, CITES and, in future, Chemicals. Many national governments have already operationalised the national mechanisms to integrate the implementation of the relevant MEAs to get the maximum benefit from the assistance available to them. UNEP is currently collecting feedback to develop a bottom up approach for capacity building mechanisms in the coming years.

Conclusions

There are many opportunities for synergies and collaboration for capacity building in developing countries for the MEAs that are related to Chemicals. There is already considerable capacity building infrastructure and mechanisms already in place – including those developed under UNEP DTIE's OzonAction Programme. We must continue to combine them with national expertise, regional cooperation and international partnerships to effectively address the major chemical challenges in front of us. We should look at sustainable development issues in a holistic manner and not in isolation. It is clear that there are inter-linkages between MEAs and that there are opportunities for synergies. We should explore and exploit those opportunities within the mandate given to us by the respective Parties.