

Salutations

Officials from the Ministry

Specially Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning

I am humbled to be here this morning at this HCFC Phaseout Management Plan Launch as for me and for our region it represents a very important step toward further safeguarding our environment.

Ladies and gentlemen, the next time you are outdoors I would like you to look at your shadow. Is it short or long? Did you know that the shorter your shadow, the more dangerous and intense the ultraviolet or UV radiation is? And the more at risk you are to UV exposure?

As we celebrate this occasion this morning, let us take a moment to reflect on the global efforts made thus far to preserve, protect and rehabilitate the ozone layer, a thin Ultraviolet (UV) filter found in the stratosphere, which protects us from harmful UV rays, while still allowing the warmth of the sun into the earth's atmosphere.

In the early seventies, United States chemists were the first to sound the alarm on the depleting ozone layer. That year, these scientists published the first article predicting the near disappearance of the ozone layer within 75 years. In the early 1980s, a hole in the ozone layer was observed for the first time at the Earth's poles. That discovery

was the impetus for the development of the *Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer* and the *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer*. This Protocol is an international agreement under which countries worldwide have committed to phase out Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS), and to replace these damaging chemicals with ozone-friendly substances and products. All the countries of the English Speaking Caribbean have acceded to the *Vienna Convention* and the *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer* and operates under paragraph 1 of Article V, which refers specifically to developing countries.

Some of the ozone depleting chemicals which are targeted by the Montreal Protocol includes: chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), halons, methyl chloroform, and methyl bromide as well as products using these chemicals or any blends of these chemicals. The ‘ozone hole’, which forms during the Antarctic winter in September, was created by the destruction of ozone molecules from the use of these ozone depleting substances. As a result of the formation of the ‘ozone hole’ humans as well as entire ecosystems can be severely affected. Indeed, research has shown that excessive exposure to ultra-violet radiation is harmful to all life forms, from microscopic plants found in the ocean, to farm animals and human beings, all are at risk. The effects on humans are manifested through increasing incidences of eye-cataracts, non-melanoma skin cancers, damage to genetic DNA and suppression of the efficiency of the immune system.

A quicker phase out of all ODSs and the replacement of these by alternatives and

substitutes will help in the swift repair of the ozone layer. If we stop all emissions of ODS today though, it would still take approximately 50 years for the ozone layer to repair itself due to the long lifespan of the ODSs. Hence for the sake of future generations, we need to stop adding to the vast amounts of ozone depleting substances already found in the atmosphere. Recent scientific studies have made a connection between the effects of ozone depletion and Global Climate Change, since ODSs also contribute to the warming of the earth.

Arresting the deterioration of, and ultimately restoring, the ozone layer to its original state is the main environmental challenge facing the global community. As a Region we remain committed to fulfilling our obligations under the *Montreal Protocol* and will continue to do our part to help save the ozone layer.

The English Speaking Caribbean has always been active in the Montreal Protocol process and has succeeded in thus far fulfilling all obligations with distinction. The Region has very successfully phased out the import of CFCs and has for the last three years been the first region to report annually on our ODS usage in a Convention that boasts Universal membership. The Region has also been actively involved in the decision making processes of the Protocol with representation on the Executive Committee and Implementation Committee of the Montreal protocol. In this regard I wish to make special mention of the excellent representation of this Region by the NOO of Grenada at the ExCom and the NOO of St. Lucia at the Imp Comm. This stellar representation has thrust the Caribbean region to the forefront and has branded

the Region as a force to be reckoned with in the Montreal Protocol family. Relatively speaking, we may be small islands but our voices are strong!

Today's launch of Grenada's HPMP is yet another shining example of our dedication to the global cause of the restoration of and Grenada should be very proud to be charting the way for the Region in this area.

It is to be noted ladies and gentlemen that the journey is by no means nearing an end. The challenge before us is a great one as the use of HCFC far exceeds that of CFCs when we started the CFC phase out. The task however though not daunting, is achievable. It will require the cooperation of each and every one of you in this room as well as members of the general public.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in closing I challenge each of you to do your part in the global effort to save the ozone layer by being ozone friendly and choosing products and services that are not damaging to the ozone layer. We owe it to this and future generations to protect and preserve this precious natural shield. I would like to thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here today. Your presence here this morning signals your willingness to be part of this initiative which will ultimately help in restoring the ozone layer.

I once again wish to congratulate Grenada on the launch of your HPMP and I wish you every success in meeting your targets. I would like to assure you of Trinidad and Tobago's willingness to cooperate with you at every juncture to ensure that not only is your HCFC phase out a success but that we as a region continue to be exemplars within the Montreal Protocol community.

