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PRIME MINISTER'S CLOSING ADDRESS

TO THE 'SAVING THE OZONE LAYER'

CONFERENCE IN LONDON

ON

TUESDAY 7 MARCH

Chairman, Dr. Tolba, ~~distinguished~~ honored delegates.

May I first thank you for attending this Conference and for your many distinguished contributions to its work.

There are many aspects of the global environment which demand action.

We need to give attention to the tropical rain

forests, to the food chain in the sea, to the problems of pollution.

But in this Conference we have concentrated on the single theme of the threat to the ozone layer, and we have had three aims:

- first to increase public awareness in all our countries of the threat and of the consequences for the whole world from

failure to act;

- second to commit ourselves to practical steps which will halt the damage being done to the ozone layer, without setting back people's hopes for a better life through steady economic progress;

- and third, to strengthen the existing international organisations which are

already doing such excellent work in this field, above all the United Nations Environment Programme.

I believe we can be well satisfied with the work which we have done.

But we must keep a sense of perspective. Even if all the chemicals which do damage to the ozone layer were banned tomorrow,

ozone depletion would continue for more than a decade and it would take our planet a hundred years to replenish the ozone already lost.

Such is the extent of the damage which we have <u>already</u> done.

Our success will be measured not over months or years but over decades, indeed centuries.

What is important is that ~~we now have~~ a better understanding of the problem. And we have <u>started</u> to take the necessary action.

<u>The problem</u>

Mr. Chairman, for centuries we have all worked on the assumption that mankind could pursue the goal of steady economic

progress, without changing the fundamental equilibrium of the world's systems and atmosphere.

In a very short space of time that comfortable assumption has been changed.

We have become aware that some ~~aspects~~ of ~~our pursuit of improving~~ the quality of life for the world's peoples could ~~be~~ irreversibly ~~destructive~~.

We now realise that major changes in the chemistry of the earth's atmosphere are taking place, with potentially calamitous effects for all mankind.

The destruction of stratospheric ozone is such a problem.

The ozone layer is both protector of life but

also at its mercy.

There are still many uncertainties about it.

For example, we still have much to learn about the mechanisms of ozone creation and destruction, and about the effects of increased ultra-violet radiation on living organisms.

Indeed, I thought a recent article in the Economist magazine put it very well in

summarising the uncertain state of scientific knowledge about the ozone layer:

"how full" they asked "is a bucket of indeterminate size, with unknown capacity and a questionable number of leaks that is being refilled at an unknown rate and which you cannot easily see?".

But our knowledge is increasing.

Scarcely a week goes by without reading or hearing of some new discovery.

We learn more about the ~~complexity of the~~ linkages between different aspects of atmospheric chemistry.

For example, the chloroflurocarbons which cause the break up of ozone molecules are

also ~~important in~~ add~~ing~~ to the greenhouse effect and therefore the climatic change which may follow.

In addition to the damage to the ozone layer already identified over the Antarctic a recent expedition to the Arctic has shown that, in the words of the scientists taking part, the region is "primed for ozone destruction".

Their evidence suggests that ozone can be destroyed not just at the top of the stratosphere, as earlier theories have predicted, but also lower down and by a different set of chemical reactions.

The role of science

Good science has to be the foundation stone of our common efforts to understand the problems and to deal with them.

It was theoretical science by Americans in the 1970s which identified ozone depletion as a potential problem.

predicted and deduced

It was observational ~~science~~ by the British Antarctic Survey in the 1980s which established the reality.

We need an <u>international</u> scientific effort to understand:

- what is happening to the atmosphere's chemistry;

- what needs to be done to restore a balance;

- and ~~the timespan within which action has to be taken~~ how much or how little time we have to take necessary action.

Science holds the key to the solution of the problem as well as to its definition. The same ~~Science~~ scientific method has solved many problems in the past ~~and there is every reason to expect~~

it will solve these new problems, without sacrificing the ~~industrial development~~ economic progress which is the hope and ambition of so many.

If we ~~do not~~ fail to base our policies on sound science we will ~~try to solve the wrong problems,~~ ~~or to~~ solve them in the wrong way, ~~thus~~ and thereby creating new problems.

We already know that some of the processes which

would reduce consumption of CFCs have the effect of producing or compounding other problems.

For instance, CFC substitutes in some cases will be less energy efficient, thereby increasing emissions of carbon dioxide, the main contributor to global warming.

The need for global solutions

Mr. Chairman, there is an irony about the environmental problems which now confront us.

Since the beginning of civilisation, the main damage to our way of life has come from ~~our own~~ human malevolence, and deliberate from wars, from weapons, from hostility.

population.

Another lesson which this conference has brought home to us is that we are dealing with a <u>global</u> problem. No matter at what degree of latitude we live, ozone depletion will severely affect us all, just as will global climate change.

Now ~~it is different.~~

The damage to the environment comes from the actions of millions of people conducting, ~~not war, but~~ activities which are necessary for their health, their welfare and their agricultural and economic development - activities in other words which are perceived as beneficial and good, and necessary to produce the food to sustain an increasing world

The conclusion is clear.

It is no good some of us acting to solve the problems, while others go on as before.

No-one can opt out

~~The problems will only be solved by~~ common ~~action.~~

Every country needs to be involved.

citizen can help

Every ~~country must play its full part.~~

Indeed, because we have no alternative but to

work together on a global basis to solve these problems, we have a powerful incentive to strengthen the United Nations and other international bodies including the World Bank - and that in turn could have a much wider and positive effect on international co-operation on many other issues.

The Institutions

The instruments to enable us to work together are already there.

We don't need new institutions.

There is no place for a praetorian guard of privileged countries who ~~arrogate to~~ claim upon themselves ~~the duty of~~ to lay~~ing~~ down rules and regulations for others.

Our success will depend upon co-operation

between sovereign countries, coming together with a common purpose and highly resolve.

We have the Montreal Protocol as the framework.

We have UNEP as the main institution.

We have the World Meterological Organisation.

We have the Intergovernmental Panel on

climate change.

We should use them.

Building new institutions ~~will~~ would only distract us from the real tasks.

They are:

- first to see more countries sign the Montreal Protocol.

Already 33 have done so, others have indicated that they will.

Our goal must be nothing less than to see all countries sign;

- second to strengthen our support for UNEP. Britain for its part is doubling the financial contribution which it makes each year.

I hope this will be matched by others who can afford to do so.

Practical steps

And within the institutions we need to put in hand practical steps to deal with the problems we have identified:

- steps to slow down the damage to the ozone layer before it is too late;
- steps which will eventually allow it to recover.

We have at this Conference addressed ourselves

to how we can eventually eliminate the use of CFCs and Halons.

To this end many industrialised countries including the United Kingdom and its European Community partners, have committed themselves to the goal of ending production and consumption of the CFC's identified in the Montreal Protocol ~~before~~ by the end of this century.

That sounds very ambitious.

It is.

But ~~it is necessary.~~

Even with that action, damage already done to the ozone layer will be with us, our children and our grandchildren, throughout the twenty-first century.

One result of this Conference is that we can see that there are technological

solutions to ozone depletion that can be brought within the reach of every country.

Substitute technologies and substances are steadily becoming a reality.

Let me mention some of the action we are taking in this country.

Refrigeration circuits are being re-designed to reduce the amount of CFCs used as refrigerants.

Measures being taken in common with other EC Member States in this field are expected to reduce the CFCs used by the domestic appliance industry in the Community by 45 per cent ~~before~~ by the end of this year.

Looking further ahead it might perhaps be possible to have a solid-state refrigerator which uses no gases at all.

One of our biggest companies ICI is spending £100 million in developing and researching alternatives to CFCs.

Our aerosol industry is moving to alternative technologies such as pump-action sprays

and compressed air.

Indeed our aerosol manufacturers have agreed to phase out the non-essential use of CFCs by the end of this year, an excellent example.

Our plastic foam industries are concentrating on recycling the CFCs used in the manufacturing process.

A recovery plant has been developed which

should recycle close to 100 per cent of the CFC used.

Mr. Chairman, these examples underline the vitally important role of industry and of the private sector in developing new technologies and transferring them across the world.

The response of world industry to the

technological challenge of ozone depletion, exemplified at this Conference, at its surgeries and the exhibition, holds the ~~firm~~ promise of effective and economic measures available to all countries.

The effects on economic growth

I have spoken earlier of the degree to which we are dealing with a global problem.

I recognise that some countries which are only beginning to now ~~embarking on~~ industrialise ~~ing~~ their economies will want to be assured that the measures necessary to halt the damage to the ozone layer will not place severe ~~unacceptable~~ limits on their economic growth.

Clearly it would be intolerable for the countries which have already

industrialised, and have caused the greater part of the problems we face, to expect others to pay the price in ~~the~~ terms of their people's hopes and welfare.

Our Conference has shown that this need not be so.

It has underlined instead some very important lessons.

First, the solutions indicated at the Conference are compatible with continued and sustainable economic growth. This is ~~absolutely~~ essential if the hopes of Third World countries for higher standards of living are to be met. That is what we mean by our commitment to the concept of sustainable growth.

Second, the ~~substitute~~ new technologies and substances which are becoming available should help these countries achieve their objectives for economic growth without repeating the mistakes which (we in the industrialised countries have made.

The Conference has shown us that ~~a CFC phase is not necessary.~~ other CFC need not go through the CFC phase

And third, we need the prosperity of all

nations to finance the measures necessary to safeguard the environment and protect the balance of nature.

We cannot do it at each other's expense.

We all need to be able to grow and to prosper - and to pursue the economic and trade policies which make that possible.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, our most important task of all is

~~to change attitudes~~, to make people

to

realise that simply carry~~ing~~ on as we are

is not an option.

knowledge

We need to create greater public awareness of

~~the problems~~ and understanding of the need

for action ~~of the right kind.~~

~~We must mobilise the~~ power of the public

opinion and the ~~individual~~ consumer on

~~environmental issues.~~

That power is already making itself felt in many of our countries.

You see it in the sale of ozone-friendly products in our shops and supermarkets - an example of how the individual citizen can ~~make his or her choice~~.

The scientists, the industrialists, the

politicians have to find the facts and propose the solutions.

But it is only with the understanding and active cooperation of millions upon millions of individual people

- people who understand the problem;
- people who see the need to restore the balance of nature before it is too late;
- people who are ready to change their

customs and habits in what they buy and what they do, ~~ready to exercise greater care to defend their environment~~.

On~~ly in~~ that ~~way shall~~ we shall overcome one of the greatest challenges which life on earth has yet faced.

We must hand on the title deeds of life to our grandchildren and beyond. That is our first obligation; We were unwilling to relax in our first duty.