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MRS PONSONBY

OZONE LAYER CONFERENCE

I am afraid that the Prime Minister said expansively to Mr Ridley this morning that she would like to give a reception at Number 10 for all those involved in the Ozone Layer Conference. May I leave it to you to find a date and then liaise with Sue Goodchild and the DoE on the guest list?

C. D. POWELL

7 March 1989

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE: FINAL DRAFT OF 6 MARCH

FROM: THE RT.HON. NICHOLAS RIDLEY, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
UNITED KINGDOM

TO: MR KAJ BARLUND
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT
FINLAND

Greetings.

As Chairman of the "Saving the Ozone Layer" Conference, held in London on 5/7 March, 1989, I offer a message to the important first meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol which you will chair in Helsinki on 2/5 May.

Of the 123 countries registered at the London Conference, 80 were represented at Ministerial or equivalent level, including the European Commission. The discussions all revealed a remarkable consensus on the need for action to protect the ozone layer against the substances that are damaging it. They also revealed a recognition that this action, notably plans for phasing out ozone depleting chemicals, must be but one component in a concerted international effort to limit human activities that threaten the balance of atmosphere and climate. There was clear evidence of the growing concern of governments from every region of the world about the urgent need for effective action to safeguard the ozone layer.

SCIENCE

We heard convincing scientific evidence that the ozone layer had already been seriously damaged by chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons and other substances. As a result, harmful radiation will reach the earth's surface, threatening human health, crops, materials and the functions of ecological systems. The persistence of CFCs in the atmosphere means that whatever is done now, the problem will persist for decades, and every year of inaction will aggravate

it. To restore the ozone layer to a satisfactory condition nothing short of the final withdrawal of CFCs, halons and other ozone depleting substances will suffice. The provisions of the Montreal Protocol were criticised by many delegations as not going far enough. There was general acceptance that the ultimate objective has to be the total elimination of production and consumption of CFCs and halons.

Many participants emphasised, moreover, that these chemicals were powerful greenhouse gases, and that they contributed significantly to threats to the earth's climate. Action to protect the ozone layer will therefore at the same time reduce the impact of global warming, which poses particularly serious threats to certain low-lying developing countries.

TOWARDS PHASE OUT

Senior industrialists informed us of the substantial efforts they were making to accelerate work on substitute chemicals. They reported actions already taken to prevent losses of CFCs to the environment, to recover and recycle more in refrigerants and to eliminate ozone depleting chemicals from aerosols and insulating foam.

Industry is investing heavily in these developments. Their speeches emphasised that substitution for some uses - such as aerosols and refrigerants - would be easier than for others, such as the electronics industry. They forecast little difficulty in meeting the goals of the Montreal Protocol and indeed recognised the need to go further, but some were doubtful about complete phase out by 1999. They urged the Conference to recognise that there were complex problems to solve; that the industry was giving priority to the development of safe alternatives; that they were investing in considerable research and they needed in particular a well defined time frame on which to plan investment. Delegates emphasised, nevertheless, that industry should be asked to concentrate even greater efforts on providing solutions and promoting them world-wide.

At the same time, it was recognised that the switch to alternative materials would involve major costs, and that it was necessary to plot a course for change that would not impede industrial and social advance in the developing world.

The informal Conference "surgeries" provided opportunities for delegates to exchange information and experience with scientists and industry representatives. This, together with the strong media interest, should increase awareness of the problems and solutions. Essential information is available, but should be much more widely propagated.

The International Citizens' Symposium, held in parallel with this Conference, reached broadly similar conclusions. While welcoming the Montreal Protocol, and calling on all nations to join in and abide by it, the Symposium emphasised that new scientific evidence had rendered it out of date. They called for amendment to strengthen the control measures, inter alia, to provide for greatly accelerated phase out of CFCs, halons and other ozone depleting chemicals, for substitutes that were environmentally safe and for much strengthened assistance to developing countries. There was general agreement on the emphasis by the Symposium that an informed citizenry is essential to the solution of the severe global problems.

Strong support was expressed for the review process laid down in the Protocol, the structure of which would need to be decided at the first meeting of the parties. The work of expert panels on scientific, technical, economic and environmental aspects would be of crucial importance.

POLITICAL ACTION

The Montreal Protocol came into force on 1 January 1989 with 30 parties. 3 countries have since become parties; 20 indicated at the Conference that they hoped to sign up soon; a further 12 indicated that they would now give serious consideration to the Protocol. The Japanese announced that they would be holding a seminar aimed at promoting awareness of the need to protect the ozone layer and at encouraging more countries in the Asian and Pacific regions to accede to the Protocol.

Of the 60 Government delegations participating in the debate all without exception recognised the gravity of the problem and voiced their determination to re-double efforts to reduce CFC use or to avoid dependence in the future. There was overwhelming support for the Montreal Protocol.

All industrialised countries are expected to achieve very significant reductions before the end of the century.

These would go well beyond the existing requirements of the Montreal Protocol and would be achieved in a variety of ways in accordance with the policies and practices of the countries concerned. They included regulatory measures, voluntary agreements with industry, codes of conduct, setting standards and stimulating innovation. It was made clear that action was already being taken to go beyond the Montreal Protocol.

Some newly industrialised countries indicated that they had begun investment in CFC dependent technologies. Their economic planning would need to take account of the global threats this posed. They asked how the Montreal Protocol could help solve this problem.

Constructive ideas were put forward for helping developing countries move to a CFC free world in a way that would not jeopardise their economic growth. There would be a need to look at ways of promoting effective technology flows, industrial investment, training, information exchange and facilitation of appropriate financial and economic support. Bilateral and multilateral aid would have important roles to play. Ways of helping developing countries should be a major feature of the review of the Protocol, and should be urgently examined in all appropriate international contexts.

It was pointed out that rapid rates of population growth with increased per capita use of resources will pose unique threats to the biosphere. Technical solutions were needed to help solve their human problems.

Concern was expressed about economic and environmental dangers if substantial reductions in CFCs and halons in one country or region were offset by slower action or even increased use in others. The Review of the Protocol should ensure that any more stringent provisions are applied even-handedly.

All countries, whether parties to the Protocol or not, agreed that there was urgent need for global action; that the Protocol was the right framework and that measures stronger than at present required would be needed. There was consensus that all countries of the world must commit themselves to concerted action to achieve the goal of saving the ozone layer.

AS THE REPORT OF THE WORLD COMMISSION ON
ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT HAS SHOWN,
SENSITIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH IS A PREREQUISITE
FOR THE EARTH'S ENVIRONMENTAL SURVIVAL.

CONTINUED RELEASE OF OZONE DESTROYING CHEMICALS
IS INCONSISTENT WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,
DEFINED IN THE REPORT AS DEVELOPMENT THAT MEETS
TODAY'S NEEDS WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE ABILITY
OF FUTURE GENERATIONS TO MEET THEIR OWN NEEDS.
WHAT IS NEEDED IS FULL PARTNERSHIP - GOVERNMENTS,
INDUSTRY AND CITIZENS ALL HAVE A KEY PART TO PLAY.

THE THREAT TO THE OZONE LAYER IS A THREAT TO
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. WE CANNOT FAIL TO MEET
THIS COMMON CHALLENGE IF WE ARE TO HAVE A
COMMON FUTURE.