

Project



Sky-Hole Patching II



A joint WCO-UNEP project which has resulted in the seizure of thousands cylinders of smuggled ozone depleting substances



Sky-Hole Patching II

Bangkok 10 November 2010

The results from a secret joint global Customs enforcement project, codenamed 'Sky-Hole Patching II', were released today at the 22nd Meeting of the Parties to the *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer*, highlighting the seriousness of illegal trade in a group of environmentally destructive chemicals.

While a number of seizures were reported from Europe, Africa and Central Asia, the majority of seizures took place in the Asia-Pacific region, in ports in China, including Hong Kong, and in India. The Royal Thai Customs authority netted an impressive 1200 cylinders of illegally-imported ozone depleting substances (ODS) during this period. A particularly interesting case was reported from the Gambia, where two tonnes of cocaine smuggled from South America was seized together with several dozen cylinders of CFCs – highlighting the

interrelation of ODS smuggling with organized crime, in this case, narcotics smuggling. As well as targeting illegal imports, the project also covered exports,

Preliminary Results

Through coordinated action over the project's six months duration (May to November 2010), customs authorities around the world seized over 7,500 cylinders of illegally-imported or attempted illegal exports of ODS, equivalent to 108 tonnes of ozone-depleting CFCs, HCFCs and other gases regulated under the international ozone protection agreement. Customs officers participating in the project also made seizures of more than 660 pieces of ODS-containing equipment.





WCO Secretary General, Kunio Mikuriya, said: *“This joint exercise of global Customs community has again demonstrated our continued commitment to protecting our environment”*. He added: *“The law enforcement agencies still need to remain vigilant to make sure the ODS phase-out schedule is fully respected. The WCO remains of the firm belief that environment crime can only be effectively combated through strong partnership at all levels. The WCO is now even more determined to bolster the partnership further as coordination, cooperation and communication are the enemies of those who profit from this trade”*.

Climate benefit

The ODS seized in this operation, had they not been confiscated would have presented the equivalent of around 400 thousand tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions, if released to the atmosphere.

with, for example, French Customs successfully stopping the illegal export of 44 tonnes of HCFCs in two incidents.

Project *Sky-Hole Patching II* was initiated by the World Customs Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) DTIE OzonAction Programme and had the participation of Customs administrations from over 80 countries. In developing countries, National Ozone Units - the government units responsible for managing the national compliance strategies under the Montreal Protocol - actively supported the Customs administrations in this operation through expert advice and information sharing.

The WCO RILO network also played an important role in coordinating actions of Customs at the regional level, with the RILO Asia Pacific acting as the Operation Coordination Unit. Customs officials at 275 targeted seaports and other strategically selected points intensified their risk profiling and physical controls over several thousands of shipments to identify high-risk shipments, and notified each other of any suspicious outgoing and incoming shipments. The WCO communication tool *CENcomm* was used for information exchange during the project.

Rajendra Shende, Head of UNEP DTIE OzonAction Branch, said: *“Illegal trade in ODS poses a threat to the successful recovery of the protective ozone layer as well as to the climate system, since most of the smuggled chemicals are also powerful greenhouse gases. In the 2000s, illegal trade in ODS was reported to have been worth around US\$ 60 million – equivalent to 10-20% of the global legitimate trade”*. He continued: *“We are very encouraged to see the continued commitment and high priority WCO gives to environmental issues and are proud to be cooperating on this joint project. Sky Hole Patching II is helping to build awareness and cooperation between the customs community and the environmental authorities to combat smuggling of ODS, and enable full compliance with the requirements of the Montreal Protocol”*.

The World Customs Organization (WCO)



is the organisation exclusively focused on Customs matters. With its worldwide membership, the WCO is now recognised as the voice of the global Customs community. It is particularly noted for its work in areas covering the development of global standards, the simplification and harmonisation of Customs procedures, trade supply chain security, the facilitation of international trade, the enhancement of Customs enforcement and compliance activities, anti-counterfeiting and piracy initiatives, public-private partnerships, integrity promotion, and sustainable global Customs capacity building programmes. The WCO also maintains the international Harmonized System goods nomenclature, and administers the technical aspects of the WTO Agreements on Customs Valuation and Rules of Origin.

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United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)



is the United Nations system's designated entity for addressing environmental issues at the global and regional level. Its mandate is to coordinate the development of environmental policy consensus by keeping the global environment under review and bringing emerging issues to the attention of governments and the international community for action. The UNEP DTIE OzonAction Branch assists developing countries and countries with economies in transition (CEITs) to enable them to achieve and sustain compliance with the Montreal Protocol.

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The Green Customs Initiative

GreenCustoms

comprises the secretariats of the following multilateral environmental agreements: Basel, Cartagena, CITES, Montreal, Rotterdam Stockholm, as well as Interpol, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, UNEP, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organization. The aim of the initiative is to enhance the capacity of customs personnel to monitor and facilitate the legal trade and to detect and prevent illegal trade in environmentally sensitive commodities covered by relevant conventions and multilateral environmental agreements

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