UNEP en.lighten intiative Establishes Expert Taskforces

Paris, France, October 20, 2010 -- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) en.lighten initiative has been established to address the challenge of promoting and accelerating the global market transformation towards environmentally sustainable, energy-efficient lighting technologies. The goal is to develop a global strategy to phase-out inefficient lighting thereby reducing global GHGs and the amount of mercury released from coal combustion.

To accomplish these objectives, the initiative has established six experts Taskforces comprised of international representatives from governments (Australia, Brazil, China, Cuba, India, Japan, Philippines, U.S.), the private sector, civil society, academia, research organizations and international agencies (such as the World Bank, UNDP, International Finance Corporation) to develop guidance and technical recommendations. Initial Task force meetings were held throughout September 2010 to determine the scope and direction of each.

The Country Lighting Assessments, Market and Data Analysis Taskforce has been established to gather country specific data and determine the financial impact (costs and savings in terms of CO2, electricity and economic savings) of implementing efficient lighting technologies. The lighting markets in over 100 countries are now being analyzed to identify key information for decision-makers and stakeholders such as: estimating the amount of the energy, CO2 emissions and financial savings associated with a transition from inefficient to efficient lighting technologies; the financial costs for each country to make a transition to efficient lighting; and, an overview of existing lighting related policies, standards and other relevant initiatives in each country. The findings from the Country Lighting Assessments will be released at an event to be held during the UNFCCC COP-16 conference in Cancun, Mexico, in December 2010.

The Product Quality, Testing, Monitoring, Enforcement and Verification Taskforce will ensure that efficient lighting products meet minimum quality standards relevant for the needs of each specific country to avoid the introduction of lighting technologies which otherwise may cause consumer frustration and a loss of credibility for energy efficient lighting products. This Taskforce is responsible for facilitating the transition to energy efficient lighting by providing guidance for sustainable and harmonized quality and testing standards and to develop recommendations and guidelines for monitoring, verification and enforcement.

The Policy, Regulation, Voluntary initiatives and Finance Taskforce will assess existing policies and initiatives by identifying best practice examples and develop an efficient lighting toolkit to provide hands-on guidance to countries interested in developing policies to promote efficient lighting. The group will also highlight specific financial mechanisms to aid market transformation. Best practice examples for regulatory and voluntary initiatives will include; model legislation, a policy calculator for savings, evaluation templates for policymakers, standards, testing facilities, performance criteria and monitoring and verification programs.

The Standards, Labels and Technology Evolution Taskforce will provide recommendations on how best to address the harmonization of performance and measurement standards. They are responsible for reviewing test methods, energy and other performance requirements and standards, including quality and energy parameters, which have been implemented to improve energy efficiency globally. This Taskforce will map the existing standards and labeling activities to identify best practices in energy efficiency.

The Consumer, Environmental Protection and Recycling Taskforce has been established to identify and review global policies related to mercury-containing lighting products, and to provide recommendations for producer responsibility and the end of life treatment for all lighting products. This group has been tasked to concentrate on developing guidance and recommendations for environmental, health and safety issues for both countries that have domestic production of lamps and for those who import them. The Taskforce will also provide recommendations on the total life cycle for mercury containing lighting technologies including recycling efforts.

The Off-Grid Lighting Taskforce will focus on the switch from fuel-based lighting to more energy efficient and environmental friendly lighting technologies. They will work in conjunction with the other Taskforces and focus on developing and emerging countries which lack electricity to develop efficient solutions. The Taskforce will develop recommendations for facilitating the transition from kerosene-based to energy efficient off-grid lighting which will significantly improve the environment and health of citizens in developing countries. The group will deal with policy, standards, financing mechanisms, product quality, recycling, consumer awareness, and monitoring for off-grid lighting products.

A global mapping initiative will also be undertaken to identify the various off-grid initiatives with the objective of reducing overlap and coordinating activities by geographic region. Additionally, a baseline study on net environmental impact of modern off-grid lighting vs. kerosene lighting and low quality battery based lighting products will be created.

Through these Taskforces, the en.lighten initiative aims to strengthen capacities among countries, governments and the private sector to lead successful lighting market transformation programs that will bring new technologies to developing countries while saving energy, money and protecting the environment.