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Nations to Stem Growing Crisis Spurs Action by Civic Leaders Launch Effort to Save Ozone: Inability of Delegates at Irvine Conference

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# Civic Leaders Launch Effort to Save Ozone

## Inability of Nations to Stem Growing Crisis Spurs Action by Delegates at Irvine Conference

By ERIC BAILEY, Times Staff Writer

Irrked by stumbling international efforts to stem a growing atmospheric crisis, leaders from two dozen U.S. cities launched a grass-roots campaign Friday in Irvine to restrict compounds that destroy the Earth's protective ozone layer.

Officials from cities across the nation expressed hope that they can work on the municipal level to vanquish a foe that has so far confounded nations.

The assorted city council members and civic administrators are expected today to adopt a two-page "Stratospheric Protection Accord" calling on local governments throughout the United States, Canada and other foreign countries to approve policies banning ozone-depleting compounds.

Following the Irvine City Council's adoption Tuesday of a tough menu of restrictions, the two-day conference is the first step in a campaign designed to speed elimination of the compounds for industrial use and in everyday items such as fast-food cartons and automobile air-conditioning systems.

Leaders of the conference suggested that support from only a patchwork of cities across the United States would be enough to hasten regional, national and eventual international action to ban chlorofluorocarbons and other compounds that destroy the ozone layer. The layer protects the planet from harmful ultraviolet radiation.

A handful of cities could push industrial producers to seek a single state or national law regulating the use of the compounds, they contend.

"I think it's going to help spur action," said Irvine Mayor Larry Agran, a conference organizer. "If we get 20, 30, 50, 100 cities around the world to sign on . . . we can hasten international action."

Agran and others predicted, moreover, that opposition to the scattered municipal effort would not materialize. Foes of a ban on ozone-destroying chemicals, they predict, would be hard-pressed to track down and stamp out efforts to ban the compounds in a flurry of cities scattered across the nation.

Based largely on the Irvine ordinance, the draft accord being considered today at the conference calls for a ban, by 1992, on any ozone-depleting compound, unless a substitute or alternative is unavailable. It also advocates recycling or proper disposal of ozone-depleting compounds in products such as fire extinguishers, air conditioners and refrigerators.

Moreover, it calls for a reduction of the use of fossil fuels, blamed as a chief cause of the global warming trend caused by the so-called greenhouse effect, and calls for establishment of large-scale tree-planting programs both within cities and in adjoining rural areas.

Backers said they plan to promote the concept in Japan in August during the World Conference of Mayors for Inter-City Solidarity in Hiroshima. They said they also hope to enlist other backers in September at both the World Congress of the International Union of Local Authorities in Australia and at the National League of Cities conference.

If all goes according to plan, cities that agreed to participate in the ban on ozone-destroying products would meet at a world conference in mid-1990, tentatively slated for India.

U.S. cities are expected to employ their sister-city relationships with foreign municipalities to spread word of the ban and help towns in struggling Third World nations fall in step with the campaign, said Jeb Brugmann, field programs director for Irvine-based Center for Innovative Diplomacy, a national network of municipal officials behind the effort.

"We're hoping to prove that a transition can be made through local government action to safe substitutes for these compounds," said Brugmann. "We don't have to wait until 1995 or the year 2000, like federal officials want."

In March, 12 nations within the European Community agreed to phase out several compounds blamed for eroding the protective ozone layer by the end of the century. The impact of such chemicals on the ozone layer is thought to cause global warming, and may lead to an increasing number of skin cancers and other diseases.

Other state and local governments have taken action to ban Styrofoam packaging containing chlorofluorocarbons, including Berkeley, San Francisco, Palo Alto, Los Angeles, Portland, Ore., and Newark, N.J.

Participants in Friday's daylong gathering at the Beckman Center of the National Academy of Sciences and Engineering in Irvine included council members and officials from San Jose, Sacramento and Los Angeles as well as cities in Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota and Kansas.

Several participants said they expected that list to grow. It would not be the first time that a small number of U.S. cities has sparked a movement that spreads across the country, they said, pointing to the nuclear-freeze campaign and South African divestiture as battles that began locally and blossomed into nationwide causes.

"To me, this is a call to arms," said Melinda Carlton, chief administrative officer of Topeka, Kan. "It may be the only way it's going to happen. Congress has entered an era of inertia on almost any issue you can name. But somebody has to do this. We're talking about human lives."

She noted, however, that apathy toward a local ban will have to be overcome in her own city, where some council members scoffed at the idea of Carlton attending the Irvine conference. Similar sentiments are rife throughout the Midwest and other sections of the country, she said, suggesting that many residents and city officials doubt that the local bans do much good.

Nonetheless, Carlton predicted that many doubters eventually would jump on the bandwagon to ban ozone-depleting compounds.

"If for no other reason, the cities in Kansas will do it because they don't want other cities to jump out ahead of them on an issue," she said. "If we jump out and pass a ban, even a weaker ban, it sets us up as a model for others to follow."

Similarly, some officials of even larger cities predicted that adoption of a ban on the municipal level would spur state officials to push for restrictions of their own.

Carol Johnson, a councilwoman from Minneapolis, noted how a pesticide control ordinance in nearby St. Paul pushed state authorities to adopt a similar law.

"I think a law to protect the ozone layer would be embraced by the state," she said. "If anything, it's even more critical. I'm a grandmother, and I'm worried if we don't do something, my grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be the ones who suffer."

Michael Wiener, a councilman in Albuquerque, N.M., said he sees a need for the cities to produce information packets and video presentations on the issue to help sway doubters.

"I'm afraid that when I go back to Albuquerque I'll be perceived as an environmental Chicken Little saying the sky is falling," Wiener said.

Indeed, some city leaders said they might be returning to a hostile reception.

Mike Rundle, a councilman from Lawrence, Kan., said he expects a ban would "come in conflict with the business concerns" of some residents in his city. Efforts to protect the ozone layer, he said, will probably have to take a place in line with issues such as municipal budgets and development.

"I'll have to fit it in between a lot of other concerns," he said. "I'll have to go at it in fits and starts. It's a constant problem. This will probably have to take a back burner."