

CECILIA MERCADO

UNEP Senior Programme Management Officer

Breaking Barriers: A legacy of environmental leadership and empowerment

A leader in environmental protection under the Montreal Protocol, with more than 30 years of experience in the United Nations that culminates with a well-deserved retirement. Meet **Cecilia Mercado**, who began as a government official in the Philippines and then embarked on a journey that led her to play critical roles within UNEP, where her contributions to protecting the ozone layer and fighting climate change had a significant impact.

Bridging gaps and building trust under the Multilateral Fund

Cecilia's story is a testament to her dedication to environmental protection, beginning with her early involvement in representing the Government of the Philippines in UNEP-led regional meetings of the Montreal Protocol in the early 90s.

She started with UNEP OzonAction as an Information Officer, focusing her attention on the importance of communication and outreach in ozone layer protection, to significant roles in programme management in Paris and Bangkok, and eventually to a senior position at the Multilateral Fund Secretariat in Montreal. Throughout her career, Cecilia promoted the cause of developing countries, especially small island nations vulnerable to climate change, showcasing her commitment to global environmental stewardship.

Cecilia's work showcased her crucial role in fostering trust and consensus among diverse stakeholders during meetings such as the Executive Committee Meetings and Network Meetings of National Ozone Officers, which have impacted ozone layer protection efforts worldwide. She crossed the complexities of international environmental diplomacy, balancing developing countries' needs with donor countries' expectations to find common ground and contributing to policies that shaped projects to meet compliance with the Montreal Protocol.

She expressed pride in spearheading the operational policy on gender mainstreaming for Multilateral Fund-supported projects and approaches to environmentally sound management of waste-controlled substances. She considers both policies as a significant part of her legacy, aiming to continue influencing the Multilateral Fund's projects with a gender perspective and contributing to sound refrigerant management at the end of its life.

Cecilia's tips for young girls and women

Beyond her professional achievements, Cecilia's inspiring story is one of resilience and empowerment, overcoming the challenges of navigating a male-dominated field. Cecilia's advice to young women looking to make their mark in environmental protection echoes through the ages: *"Believe in yourself, never stop learning, find a mentor, and lift others as you climb"*.

As she reflects on her career and looks forward to a well-earned retirement, her legacy within the Montreal Protocol and beyond remains indelible. Her story is not just one of individual achievement but a beacon for future generations of women in environmental protection and policy.