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Nations Closing in on Control of Super Greenhouse Gas

Cutting HFCs under Montreal Protocol avoids 0.5°C of warming by end of the century

Successful amendment will boost Paris prospects for UN climate agreement in December

Paris, France, 24 July 2015 – As midnight approached, the Parties to the Montreal Protocol took the unusual step of suspending, rather than adjourning, their Working Group meeting, to ensure they would be able to finalize terms for negotiating the final agreement to phasedown the refrigerants known as hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs, before treaty’s annual meeting in Dubai 1 to 5 November. The date for resumption of the Working Group meeting has not been set yet.

After years of resistance, first from China and India, and more recently from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, there are no longer any Parties remaining in the way to an agreement on the path forward for formal negotiations to phase down these super greenhouse gases this year during the November meeting.

“There is light at the end of the tunnel,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute of Governance & Sustainable Development, who was participating in the Paris meeting that concluded a few minutes before midnight Friday night. “This is the breakthrough we’ve been waiting for, and opens the way to concluding the HFC amendment at the November Meeting of the Parties in Dubai, which will provide climate mitigation equivalent of 100 (87-146) billion tonnes of CO₂ by mid-century, and avoid up to 0.5°C of warming by the end of the century.”

“The 95 Parties submitting formal proposals to phasedown HFCs formed a formidable block and moved the discussions forward in a methodical and patient way, overcoming the remaining resistance,” Zaelke added. They formed a “Friends of the HFC Amendment” group to coordinate their strategy. The Federated States of Micronesia continued its leadership of the island alliance, and Senegal continued its leadership of the 55-country Africa Group.

The Montreal Protocol, widely recognized as the [world’s most effective environmental treaty](#), has already phased out 98% of the production and consumption of CFCs and nearly 100 other chemicals that both destroy stratospheric ozone and warm the climate, successfully putting the stratospheric ozone layer on the path to recovery by midcentury.

In addition to phasing down the HFC refrigerants, experts from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California presented their analysis showing that improving the energy efficiency of room air conditioners in parallel with the phase down could also avoid up to 100 billion tonnes of CO₂. Energy efficiency improvements of the world’s 900 million air conditioners could produce a cumulative savings up to 97.5 billion tonnes of CO₂ by 2050. The researchers also calculate that the savings in peak demand could be equal to 500-1200 gigawatts (GW) of electricity, which would avoid (or free up for other uses), an amount of electricity equal to the production from between 1,000 and 2,500 medium-sized (500 MW) peak-load power plants by 2050, [according to the study](#).

“Improving energy efficiency of air conditioners can at least double the mitigation from phasing down the refrigerant known as HFCs,” said Zaelke.

“A successful HFC amendment this November will provide powerful momentum for the UN climate meeting in Paris in December, and a significant down payment on the mitigation needed to keep the climate safe,” Zaelke added.

The Executive Summary of the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab report is [here](#).

IGSD’s *Primer on HFCs* is [here](#).