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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Enabling a global phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) under the Montreal Protocol
- Information note from the Commission

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Commission on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Environment Council meeting on 6 March 2015.

Enabling a global phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) under the Montreal Protocol

Information note from the Commission

Since its adoption in 1989 the Montreal Protocol has agreed a timetable for the global phase-out of ozone depleting substances – in particular CFCs and HCFCs. These gases were, and to a certain extent are still, used predominantly as refrigerants in the heating, ventilation and cooling industry, for foam blowing applications or as aerosol propellants.

This phase-out of ozone depleting substances has led to the introduction of HFCs; these gases are mainly used in the same applications as ozone depleting substances and, while they are not ozone depleting, often have powerful global warming characteristics. Given that the Montreal Protocol, through its phase-out of ozone depleting substances, has created a market for gases with a high global warming potential, it is considered appropriate that the Protocol takes responsibility to limit their use. Through its mechanisms and institutions the Protocol has successfully controlled the production and consumption of ozone depleting substances and is therefore well able to do the same for HFCs, in a cost-efficient way. However, as HFCs are in the basket of gases controlled by the UNFCCC, their emissions would remain under its auspices.

A global phase-down of HFCs under the Montreal Protocol would require its amendment. Such action has been proposed by the Federated States of Micronesia and the North American countries (US, Canada and Mexico) for the last five years but no formal discussions have taken place on the proposed amendments.

Building on the 2014 adoption of the EU regulation to phase-down the use of HFCs, an EU discussion paper "enabling a global phase-down of HFCs under the Montreal Protocol" was circulated to Parties in July 2014. This paper was well received and many developing countries see its contents as a good basis for starting formal negotiations. Based on Parties' input the discussion paper was further developed at the November 2014 Meeting of the Parties. The discussion paper will now be transformed into a draft EU proposal to amend the Montreal Protocol.

Further outreach will be undertaken at a special Montreal Protocol Open-Ended Working Group meeting on HFCs during April to permit a formal submission of the amendment prior to 30 April 2015.
