

Press release: UK leads the world in new agreement to tackle global warming

The UK has today become one of the first nations to commit to a landmark agreement to reduce emissions from appliances such as air conditioning units and refrigerators that will play a major role in preventing global warming.

The Kigali amendment to the UN Montreal Protocol commits nations to reducing hydrofluorocarbon greenhouse gases (HFCs) by 85% between 2019 and 2036.

Harmful global greenhouse gases could be prevented by rising up to 11% by 2050, thanks to a pioneering move by the UK to cut down on harmful emissions from appliances such as air conditioning units and refrigerators. The United Kingdom will be one of the first countries to approve a landmark UN agreement which commits to reducing HFCs by 85% between 2019 and 2036.

The Montreal Protocol, the international treaty which this agreement sits under, is already one of the most successful treaties ever agreed, having successfully phased out 98% of ozone depleting substances – including chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons. As a result, the ozone layer is showing the first signs of recovery.

The Kigali amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which the UK today began the process of ratifying, goes even further and extends targets to HFCs. Although HFCs do not harm the ozone layer, they have a global warming potential thousands of times greater than carbon dioxide. Consequently this deal is likely to avoid close to 0.5 degrees Celsius of global warming by the end of this century, making it the most significant step yet in achieving the Paris climate agreement goal of keeping temperatures well below two degrees.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Adopting this ambitious target will mark the UK as a world leader in tackling climate change. Not only will this deal reduce global carbon emissions by the equivalent of around 70 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide by 2050 – the same as 600 coal fired power stations would produce during that time – it will also help to protect our health, our agriculture and the wider environment.

The UK, along with the rest of the EU, has already begun to phase down HFCs in accordance with EU law which requires a cut of 79% in HFCs placed on the EU market between 2015 and 2030.

The Montreal Protocol will result in an additional UK reduction of equivalent to around 44 million tonnes of carbon dioxide beyond what would be achieved under the EU Regulation alone. The value of that carbon saving is estimated at around £1.56 billion and the cost at around £390 million, representing a net benefit to the UK of £1.17 billion.

Notes to editors:

- For further information please contact Defra press office on 020 8225 7510 or out of hours on 0345 051 8486.
- As part of global efforts to tackle climate change, countries agreed at the Montreal Protocol meeting in Kigali, Rwanda in October 2016 to phase down the production and use of HFCs. Developed countries agreed to an 85% phase-down between 2019 and 2036; most developing countries agreed to 80% between 2024 and 2045; and ten developing countries (India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, The United Arab Emirates, Iran and Iraq) agreed to 85% between 2028 and 2047.

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