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### European Union Declares Support for Fast Action to Avert HFC Climate Threat

At today's climate change negotiations in Bangkok, Thailand the European Union endorsed using the Montreal Protocol to phase-down "super" greenhouse gases called hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). The EU joins the United States, Canada, Mexico, Micronesia, Mauritius and other nations in seeking rapid action under the Montreal Protocol to eliminate the acute threat to climate posed by HFCs.

Recent scientific evidence has shown that the explosive growth of HFCs, primarily used in refrigeration and air conditioning, could negate international efforts to halt climate change by cancelling out a large proportion of needed reductions of other greenhouse gases. A phase down of HFCs could prevent the equivalent of 3-5 years of total global greenhouse gas emissions.

"The EU's action provides enormous momentum for amending the Montreal Protocol to take rapid action to phase down HFCs — clearly they have joined the growing number of nations that view this as an essential part of the solution to global warming", said Fionnuala Walravens, Climate Campaigner for the Environmental Investigation Agency. Walravens added, "Agreement to take action on HFCs sends a clear signal that the world can unite when it comes to tackling climate change."

Primarily utilized as substitutes for chemicals that deplete the ozone layer, HFCs, although ozone friendly, have global warming potentials hundreds to thousands of times greater than CO<sub>2</sub>. The Montreal Protocol's historic success in controlling and eliminating ozone depleting substances means that it already has the infrastructure and experience necessary to phase out HFCs quickly and effectively.

The European Union's proposal recognises the key role the Montreal Protocol can fulfil in achieving enormous reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by phasing down HFCs. The Montreal Protocol is scheduled to meet in Port Ghalib, Egypt during the first week of November and consider two proposals for allowing the Montreal Protocol to initiate an HFC phase-down – one from North American countries (United States, Canada and Mexico) and one from Micronesia, Mauritius and a number of other island nations. Both proposals leave HFC emissions in the "basket" of gases regulated by the UNFCCC, but allow the Montreal Protocol to phase down production and use of HFCs.

“The Montreal Protocol has never failed and is the most successful environmental accord in history”, said Durwood Zaelke of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development (IGSD). “It has already saved the Earth’s ozone layer and the EU has joined those who recognize that it’s primed and ready to play a critical role in helping to prevent catastrophic climate change”.

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Editor’s notes

- The Montreal Protocol has successfully phased out virtually all of the production and use of 96 chemicals that deplete the ozone layer. With ratification by all of the countries in the world the Montreal Protocol is uniquely suited to phase down use of HFCs.
- Institutions exist within the Montreal Protocol to finance the costs of the phase-down, build the required infrastructure and facilitate the technology transfer necessary to ensure that all countries are able to meet their phase down obligations.