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MEDIA NOTE

North American Proposal to Phase Down Use of HFCs (Hydrofluorocarbons)
Under the Montreal Protocol

The U.S. Department of State announces a joint North American proposal between the Governments of the United States, Canada, and Mexico to phase down the use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. This North American proposal represents a significant down payment on efforts to be pursued at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen, Denmark, this December. The joint effort addresses the mounting threat of global climate change and represents a new resolve by the three governments to address shared environmental problems collectively.

Once adopted, the proposal would make great strides to achieve President Obama's call to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050 as well as contribute to multilateral efforts to reduce global emissions 50% by 2050. Together with our colleagues in Canada and Mexico, the U.S. government endorses phasing down HFCs under the Montreal Protocol as it has proven an effective and efficient instrument for tackling such problems in the past.

This North American proposal builds on the amendment package put forward this spring by Mauritius and the Federated States of Micronesia for consideration by Montreal Protocol Parties. The proposal calls on all countries to take action to reduce their consumption and production of HFCs, although developed countries would take the lead in this effort, as they have consistently under the Montreal Protocol.

The problem of HFCs is closely linked to the accelerated phase out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). As the demand for air conditioning and refrigeration increases globally, and as countries accelerate their efforts to phase out HCFCs to protect the ozone layer, producers of such products will turn increasingly to HFCs unless suitable alternatives can be identified. Although HFCs pose no threat to the stratospheric ozone layer, they risk exacerbating the problem of climate change as potent greenhouse gases. Phasing down consumption and production of HFCs will send an important signal about the need for alternatives that pose no problem either for the ozone layer or for the climate system.

The U.S. government looks forward to working with our partners in the run up to the 21st Meeting of the Montreal Protocol Parties in November in Egypt and in the run up to the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in December in Denmark to make the most effective use possible of the tools available to safeguard the ozone layer and protect the global climate system.

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