Statement to MOP 38

Madam President,

Your excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Fellow observer parties,

I speak on behalf of ATMOsphere and members of the Coalition for PFAS-Free Cooling and Heating, and I thank the Government and people of Rwanda for their warm welcome.

Ten years ago, in this city, the Parties chose to act on HFCs before their full impact was felt. Today we ask for that same foresight on trifluoroacetic acid, or TFA.

As HFCs are phased down, HFOs and HFO blends are taking their place. Many of them break down in the atmosphere into TFA, and HFO-1234yf converts almost entirely to it. TFA goes no further. It settles in rivers, groundwater and drinking water, and conventional treatment cannot remove it. In Germany, TFA deposition from rain is three to four times what it was in the mid-1990s. In Switzerland, concentrations have risen four- to sixfold.

Regulators are responding. Since June, the Risk Assessment Committee of the European Chemicals Agency has recommended classifying TFA as toxic to reproduction, and as very persistent and very mobile. The European Food Safety Authority has cut its acceptable daily intake by a factor of three and a half, and the United States EPA has proposed monitoring TFA in drinking water. In

September, Germany's Environment Agency drew the lesson: TFA cannot be cleaned up, so it can only be controlled at source, through the substances that form it.

Under decision XXXV/3, the Panels are now assessing breakdown products such as TFA, and the Refrigeration Technical Options Committee will report on the TFA yields of refrigerants. We urge the Parties to ask them, in that work, to consult leading independent experts in atmospheric chemistry, toxicology and water quality; to work closely with the Environmental Effects Assessment Panel; and to state clearly the confidence behind their conclusions. The Coalition will gladly share its sector-by-sector modelling of TFA from refrigerants, which we will publish early next year.

This matters especially for Article 5 Parties, who are choosing their next refrigerants now, for equipment that will still be running in the 2040s. The alternatives are proven. More than one hundred thousand shops in Europe and six hundred and fifty in South Africa already cooled with CO2, and nearly thirty million hydrocarbon cabinets keep food cold across Europe and Latin America. Choosing them now spares countries a second, costly transition.

Madam President, the ozone layer is on track to recover because this Protocol, time and again, acted before harm became irreversible. With TFA, that moment is now. Let Kigali be remembered, once more, as the place where the Parties chose foresight.

Thank you.