

40th Open-Ended Working Group of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, 11th of July 2018, UN Offices Vienna, Vienna International Centre

Opening statement – Republic of AUSTRIA

Secretary-General of the Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism

Mr. Josef Plank

Excellences,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express a warm welcome on behalf of the Government and people of Austria to the participants of the 40th Open-Ended Working Group of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol. I am glad to welcome you in the city of Vienna that gave the name to the Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer.

More than 30 years ago, in Vienna on 22 March 1985, Parties decided to take measures to prevent further depletion of the ozone layer and to work towards a phase out of harmful chemicals. This marked the beginning of a long journey towards a sustainable future.

The actions taken were improved and strengthened several times and led to a nearly complete (more than 98%) reduction of ozone depleting substances.

Recent studies and measurements clearly indicate that the ozone layer is healing and the Antarctic ozone hole has shrunk by an area about the size of India over the past decade.

As a side effect, the phase-out of ozone depleting chemicals also led to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and Parties recognised that they could make a significant contribution to climate mitigation measures. The decision of the Kigali-Amendment almost two years ago is a clear commitment to stay on this track and to globally phase down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

To remind you, the greenhouse gas emissions avoided by implementation of this amendment to the Montreal Protocol could reduce the raise of global temperatures up to 0.5 degrees Celsius. This could be an important contribution to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

In the past weeks we also received alerting signals: scientific observations of emissions of ozone depleting substances showed a significant raise of CFC-11. Although these findings clearly demonstrate the functioning of established implementing and surveillance tools of the Protocol, they also create a major concern among Parties which successfully phased out ozone depleting chemicals.

The reported incident should invite Parties to remain vigilant towards the ultimate objective of the MP: the complete phase-out of production and consumption of all ozone depleting substances. Swift and appropriate action is necessary in order to avoid a further delay of the recovery of the ozone layer. It may also encourage us to redouble our efforts to achieve this goal in the near future. It could further be seen as an opportunity to refine the implementation strategies of the Montreal Protocol with a view to make the system even more effective. Such an exercise would be beneficial for the implementation of the Kigali Amendment where a steadily growing number of Parties demonstrate a firm commitment through ratification of the legal obligations.

We should remember the strengths of the Protocol: first, a profound scientific basis for measures to be implemented, second, common but differentiated responsibility, and third, global participation.

Distinguished delegates,

Austria has completely phased out ozone depleting substances and we are strongly committed to support the phase-down of HFCs. The first regulation setting out restrictions for certain application of HFCs on national level entered into force in 2002.

Today, we find ourselves in a crucial phase of the Montreal Protocol: should we continue to follow the road of success? Or should we divert and risk undermining the recovery of the ozone layer by contributing to another global threat – climate change, which is reality already now?

The HFC phase-down under Kigali Amendment presents the international community with an unprecedented opportunity to adopt new ozone- as well as climate-friendly technologies, to improve energy efficiency, enhance employment, and thereby contribute to develop a sustainable economy.

The successes and lessons of the Montreal Protocol remain central to the global climate change discussions. A clear lesson is that a multilateral agreement with strong, science-based and legally binding limits is essential. Governments and industries can adapt, and, history shows, far more easily than anticipated. It is equally important to create incentives for compliance, funding for less developed countries and a sense of common commitment and equity.

Two years ago, the meeting in Vienna formed the basis for the successful negotiation of the Kigali-Amendment. This time we have the unique opportunity to set a milestone by starting the implementation process of the Amendment. We now face a historic chance to contribute to the recovery of the ozone layer and to climate change mitigation.

In this spirit I wish you successful deliberations.

Thank you very much!