Name of the Side Event: Regional Solutions for Sustainable Cooling and Cold Chains in Africa

Date: 3 November 2026
Time: 18:00 p.m. – 20:00 p.m. CAT
Location: Kigali Convention Centre, Room AD12-B

ORGANIZERS AND CO-ORGANIZERS:

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). Potential collaborating stakeholders include regional energy-efficiency and cooling institutions and relevant regional, national and private-sector partners.

BACKGROUND:

Demand for cooling across Africa is increasing, driven by rising temperatures, rapid urbanization, population growth and economic development. Reliable, affordable and energy-efficient refrigeration and cold-chain infrastructure are essential to preserving food, reducing post-harvest losses, improving livelihoods and supporting the development of resilient and competitive agri-food value chains.[1][2] At the same time, the transition under the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali Amendment offers an opportunity to combine refrigerant transition with energy efficiency and wider sustainable industrial development.

UNIDO has supported the Global Network of Regional Sustainable Energy Centres (GN-SEC) since 2010. In Africa, regional institutions, including the GN-SEC centres ECREEE, SACREEE, EACREEE, RCREEE and CEREEAC, offer platforms for harmonized policy, technical capacity, standards and market transformation. Regional work includes minimum energy performance standards for refrigeration and air conditioning, labelling, testing and quality infrastructure, and implementation support, with enforcement now the critical next step. UNIDO's Energy Efficiency for Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa programme provides a related example of regional market-transformation support.

Building on this institutional experience, the event will apply a systems-thinking approach to examine how regional cooperation can accelerate sustainable cold-chain solutions, from efficient refrigeration technologies and appropriate low-global-warming-potential refrigerants to skills, maintenance, business models and finance. The discussion will connect policy and institutional lessons from regional centres with practical cold-chain needs across agriculture and food distribution, while identifying pathways to implementation and scale.

OBJECTIVE:

To demonstrate how regional institutions and practical cold-chain interventions can jointly accelerate To demonstrate how regional institutions, harmonized policy frameworks and practical cold-chain interventions, combined through system-thinking approach, can jointly accelerate sustainable, affordable

[1] https://www.uncclearn.org/wp-content/uploads/library/Global_Cooling_Watch_2025.pdf
[2] https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/cf42e3c6-157e-4ea9-8873-8b3cc9242b96/content

and climate-friendly cooling in Africa, and to identify concrete opportunities for cooperation, project development and investment as the Kigali Amendment enters its second decade.

- Objective 1: Draw lessons from regional cooperation in Africa, including UNIDO-supported work on minimum energy performance standards, labelling, testing and skills, on how regional frameworks can be translated into national action and effective enforcement.
- Objective 2: Identify the technology, refrigerant, skills, servicing and business-model conditions needed for efficient, reliable and climate-friendly cold chains, from farm-level and off-grid storage to refrigerated transport and lifecycle refrigerant management.
- Objective 3: Identify priority partnerships, policy measures and financing pathways, including Multilateral Fund support through HCFC Phase-out Management Plans and Kigali Implementation Plans, climate finance and private investment, to build a pipeline of scalable regional cooling and cold-chain projects.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

• Shared understanding of the contribution of regional centres to harmonized cooling policies, standards, training and implementation.
• Practical insights into barriers and opportunities for sustainable cold-chain deployment and operation in African markets.
• Priority areas for regional collaboration identified, including standards, MEPS enforcement and labelling, capacity-building and technician certification, lifecycle refrigerant management, demonstration projects and investment mobilization.
• Potential follow-up actions and partners to connect Montreal Protocol objectives with sustainable cold-chain development.

SESSION FORMAT AND MODERATION NOTES:

The 60-minute session will use a Davos-style moderator-led conversation and no lengthy prepared speeches or slide presentations. The panel will combine perspectives from a regional energy-efficiency institution, a national ozone or energy authority, a transport refrigeration specialist, a cold-chain operator or technology provider, and the Multilateral Fund Secretariat. Speakers offer concise opening reflections, respond to targeted questions over two rounds and engage directly with one another. Audience questions are integrated near the end. The speakers suggested remain to be confirmed.

DRAFT AGENDA – TUESDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2026

Session moderators: Jude Sentongo Kafeero (moderated dialogue) and Oluyomi Banjo (audience exchange), UNIDO

TIME	DURATION	SESSION DETAILS
18:00 - 18:30	30 min	**Dinner and networking**
18:30 - 18:35	5 min	**Welcome and Framing** Regional solutions, systems thinking, cold chains and the Kigali Amendment • **Alois Mhlanga,** *Director, Climate Innovation and Montreal Protocol Division, UNIDO*
18:35 - 18:42	7 min	**Setting the Scene** Cold Chains in Africa, a Regional need that requires regional approaches and institutions • **Oluyomi Banjo,** *Industrial Development Officer, Montreal Protocol Unit, UNIDO*
18:42 - 19:12	30 min	**Session 1: Davos-style Moderated Dialogue** Round 1 (15 min): What has worked in regional partnerships and what do cold chains need? Round 2 (15 min): How can standards, technologies, skills and finance be scaled? Moderator: **Jude Sentongo Kafeero,** *Project Coordinator, Montreal Protocol Unit, UNIDO* • **Mary Najjuma,** *Doctoral Researcher and Cold-Chain Expert, London South Bank University* • **Lutendo Ndhlovu,** *National Ozone Unit, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Government of the Republic South Africa* • **Helen Walter-Terrinoni,** *Director, Global Policy & Advocacy, Trane Technologies* • **Craig Girdlestone,** *International Technical Consultant, Africa Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Cooling and Cold-chain (ACES)* • **Kevin Fay,** *Chairman and CEO of Alcalde & Fay*
19:12 – 19:23	11 min	**Session 2: Interactive Audience Exchange** Short questions and responses, with moderator inviting concrete partnerships and implementation proposals Moderator: **Oluyomi Banjo,** *Industrial Development*

TIME	DURATION	SESSION DETAILS
		Officer, Montreal Protocol Unit, UNIDO
19:23 – 19:30	**7 min**	• **Conclusions and Way Forward** **Nafissa Elsouri,** *Associate Technical Expert, Montreal Protocol Unit, UNIDO*