Kigali Amendments to Montreal Protocol Mark a Major Progress in Combating Global Warming

After seven years of negotiations, on 14 October 2016, at the 28th Meeting of Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete Ozone Layer, an agreement was reached to substantially limit the emission of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) that contribute to global warming. The important role played by this group of chemicals, used in refrigeration and air conditioning, is evident from the scientific estimate that without a mitigation plan, HFCs could warm the world by an additional half a degree celsius by the end of the century.

This agreement will ensure that industrialized countries bring down their HFC production and consumption by at least 85 per cent compared to their annual average values in the period 2011-2013. They will begin phasing out HFCs in 2019. A group of developing countries including AALCO Member States like China and South Africa are mandated to begin phasing out in 2024. They agreed to reduce their HFC use by 85 per cent of their average value in 2020-22 by the year 2045. Another set of countries including AALCO Member States like India, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have agreed to begin phasing out HFCs in 2028 and will cut down their HFCs by 85 per cent of their values in 2024-26 by the year 2047.

Countries also agreed to provide adequate financing for HFCs reduction, the cost of which is estimated at billions of dollars globally. The exact amount of additional funding will be agreed at the next Meeting of the Parties in Montreal, in 2017. Grants for research and development of affordable alternatives to hydrofluorocarbons will be the most immediate priority.

It is estimated that complete elimination of HFCs by the year 2050 will prevent about 0.5 degree celsius rise in global temperatures by the end of this century. For this reason, the Kigali Amendment, as it is being called, is considered absolutely vital for reaching the Paris Agreement target of keeping global temperature rise to below 2 degree celsius compared to pre-industrial times.