



Helping Asia Pacific switch to ozone- and climate-friendly refrigerants



Bangkok, 15 November 2016 – A UN Environment consultation for Asia-Pacific air-conditioning industry experts held in Ningbo, China has helped strengthen national capacities to switch to climate-friendly alternatives to high-GWP (global warming potential) refrigerants, the use of which has to be reduced under a recent landmark global agreement.

The 10-11 November event, jointly organized with China's Foreign Economic Cooperation Office, the China Household Electrical Appliance Association and other partners, followed the October 2016 Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

The Kigali Amendment has committed all countries to time-bound reductions in the use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) – the powerful greenhouse gases that are replacing ozone-depleting hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) which are mainly used in the refrigeration and air-conditioning sector and are being phased out under the three-decade-old Montreal Protocol.

Although a number of climate-friendly alternatives to HCFCs are commercially available, safety issues, in particular flammability has slowed their adoption in developing countries, including in Asia Pacific.

The Informal Consultation of Regional Experts on the Guidebook on Codes of Practices in Handling Low-GWP and Flammable Refrigerant Used in the RAC discussed issues related to safe handling of the low-GWP alternatives to HCFCs.

“Following the historic Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, Asia-Pacific developing countries need stronger capacities to address safety issues for the adoption of climate-friendly alternative refrigerants,” said Isabelle Louis, Acting Regional Director, UN Environment Asia Pacific.

Thousands of times more powerful than carbon dioxide in their global warming effect, HFCs are fast replacing HCFCs in the RAC sector in the region as rapid economic growth and a fast growing middle class increases the demand for air-conditioning.

Many developing Asia-Pacific countries lack a full understanding of the risks and potential impact of low-GWP alternatives to HCFCs. A UNEP-China Trust Fund project implemented by the UN Environment OzonAction is addressing this gap by building capacities of government and industry partners in developing Asia-Pacific countries for the safe introduction of the flammable alternatives to HCFCs. Three countries are also being assisted to develop national policies and infrastructure to promote the safe use of these low-GWP refrigerants.

A technical guide for the manufacture, transport, storage, installation, maintenance and disposal of flammable refrigerants which has been developed by the project was reviewed by the experts during the Informal Consultation.

An International Workshop on the Alternatives to HCFC-22 in the Room Air-conditioner (RAC) Sector held on 9 November also helped enhance understanding of policies and standards required for the adoption of low-GWP alternatives in the room air-conditioning sector, as well as new development of alternatives.

Among the experts at the Ningbo events was a female RAC trainer from Fiji National University. Her participation was a demonstration of the UN Environment OzonAction support to gender equality-related goals and targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda through capacity building for female RAC technicians who are entering the male-dominated field.

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