

COP13/MOP36 Highlights: Thursday, 31 October 2024

The high-level segment (HLS) of the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP13) to the Vienna Convention and the 36th Meeting of the Parties (MOP36) to the Montreal Protocol opened Thursday morning. Delegates continued meeting in contact and informal groups throughout the day, in parallel to the HLS.

Opening of the HLS

COP12 President Ndiaye Cheikh Sylla (Senegal) opened the HLS. Lauding the Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol as a “shining example of multilateral action,” Elizabeth Mrema, Deputy Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), called for the universal ratification of the Kigali Amendment by 2026, highlighting its climate mitigation benefits, including avoiding up to 1°C of warming by the end of the century.

Akanat Promphan, Minister of Industry, Thailand, announced that his country ratified the Kigali Agreement in 2024, and noted they were accelerating the phase-out of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) in the same manner they phased out chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in the early years of the Montreal Protocol.

In his remarks as outgoing COP President, Sylla expressed thanks for: the work of the Ozone Research Managers in identifying gaps in observation and monitoring; and the Advisory Committee for the General Trust Fund for Financing Activities on Research and Systematic Observations Relevant to the Vienna Convention (GTF) for guaranteeing resources for observation and monitoring.

MOP35 President Azra Rogović-Grubić (Bosnia and Herzegovina) reflected on her time in office, which included the largest ever replenishment—USD 965 million—of the Multilateral Fund (MLF). She noted the opportunities this presents for developing countries to phase out hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) and phase down HFCs through cutting-edge policies.

Organizational Matters

Election of COP13 officers: By acclamation, delegates elected: President: Yaqoub Al-Matouq (Kuwait); Vice-Presidents: Liana Ghahramanyan (Armenia); Gilda María Torres (Paraguay); Sandrine Benard (Norway); and Rapporteur: Beatrice Odwong Atim (Uganda).

Election of MOP36 officers: Delegates also elected: President: Kerryne James (Grenada); Vice-Presidents: Ndiaye Cheikh Sylla (Senegal); Wan Abdul Latiff Wan Jaffar (Malaysia); Alain Wilmart (Belgium); and Rapporteur: Claudia Dumitru (Romania).

Adoption of the HLS agenda, organization of work, credentials of representatives, and other matters: Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work ([UNEP/OzL.Conv.13/2–UNEP/OzL.Pro.36/2](#)), with no other matters raised.

Delegates were reminded of the process for submitting, reviewing, and accepting credentials.

Presentations by the Assessment Panels

Scientific Assessment Panel (SAP) Co-Chair David Fahey provided a status [report](#), focusing on preparations for the 2026

Assessment Report, and called for governments to nominate scientific experts, including early-career scientists.

Environmental Effects Assessment Panel (EEAP) Co-Chair Janet Bornman presented the EEAP [report](#) on changes in the ozone layer and ultraviolet radiation (UV), and their interaction with the climate system, describing new modelling studies that reinforce benefits of the Montreal Protocol. The presentation also examined potential effects of stratospheric aerosol injection.

Technology and Economic Assessment Panel (TEAP) Co-Chair Bella Marañon presented the TEAP status [report](#) as well as the work of its five Technical Options Committees (TOCs). The report focused on the topics of the upcoming TEAP 2026 assessment, sector highlights, and emerging issues, including foam blowing agents, fire suppression, methyl bromide, metered dose inhalers (MDIs), emissions of HFC-23, refrigerants, energy efficiency, and life-cycle refrigerant management (LRM).

In the ensuing discussion, the Assessment Panels responded to questions from BAHRAIN, the US, NORWAY, the EU, and SAUDI ARABIA. They noted, among other issues, that: fourth-generation blowing agents could be blended with water to provide the same boiling point stability as HFC-141b; there are threats to the reclamation of halons 1301 and 1211; they would provide further information on methyl bromide emission sources; there are difficulties in assessing the effects of chronic exposure to trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) in humans; the three panels were working jointly to address definitional challenges related to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS); and there are validated high-efficiency and low-global-warming-potential (GWP) refrigerants that are safe to use under high-ambient temperature conditions without sacrificing performance.

Report for Executive Committee (ExCom) of the MLF

Maria Antonella Parodi, Chair, MLF ExCom, presented the report for the ExCom activities, meetings, and decisions since MOP35 ([UNEP/OzL.Pro.36/8](#)). She gave an update on the development of cost guidelines for funding the phase-down of HFCs in Article 5 countries and the energy efficiency operational framework with an agreed MLF funding window of USD 100 million. She also reported on collaborations with other UN agencies and the World Bank to assist parties in the preparation of Kigali Implementation Plans (KIPs) and other implementation matters.

Statements

GRENADA emphasized their self-imposed accelerated timeline to phase out HFCs by 2026, efforts to support refrigerant recovery and reclamation, and commitment to mainstreaming gender and youth inclusion through the Protocol. Noting that “with the climate crisis at center stage, the old way is not enough,” FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA (FSM) called for ongoing efforts to address life-cycle refrigerant management and the impacts of nitrous oxide as an ozone depleting substance (ODS) and greenhouse gas.

ESWATINI commended the “unprecedented cooperation” of parties to the Montreal Protocol and spoke of the “considerable progress” they have made in phasing out ODS and adopting minimum energy performance standards for cooling equipment.

UGANDA shared national measures for adopting ozone- and climate-friendly alternative technologies, while highlighting

challenges in accessing technologies for the recycling and reclamation of refrigerants.

The EU reminded delegations of the upcoming milestones for the Convention, Protocol, and Kigali Amendment, calling on parties to see this as an opportunity to go beyond implementation and toward empowering communities to take steps to safeguard the planet. ANGOLA illustrated the success of its implementation programmes with technical expertise fostered within both the public and private sectors

CUBA referred to challenges from economic downturns and sanctions, and called for financial support to enable implementation. MALDIVES highlighted its phase out of HCFCs as the first by a developing country and stated its fisheries sector was dependent on suitable refrigerant alternatives with a lower GWP. IRAN mentioned its national ozone network as an effective decentralized mechanism across its provinces and called for further implementation support.

SOUTH AFRICA called for an adequate number of state-of-the-art atmospheric monitoring stations around Africa and urged all parties to ratify the Kigali Amendment. SOMALIA described its comprehensive framework of national legislation and policies on environmental protection, climate change, and ozone layer preservation, alongside its commitment to reduce HFCs.

CAMBODIA expressed its commitment to protect the ozone layer and combat climate change and called for financial support to help realize their commitments under the Protocol and the Kigali Amendment. The PHILIPPINES underlined their dedication to protecting the ozone layer and addressing climate change, highlighted phase-down programmes for HFCs, and described their plans for an HFC-importation freeze.

The US urged all parties to ratify the Kigali Amendment; highlighted the MLF's USD 100 million funding window to promote energy efficiency; expressed concern over unexplained emissions of HFC-23; and called for a strong decision on monitoring. UKRAINE noted national efforts to implement climate-friendly technologies, but shared that Russia's war against the country is hampering efforts to meet obligations under the Montreal Protocol and the Kigali Amendment. In a right of reply, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION stated that this platform should not be used for one-sided accusations.

MALAYSIA outlined their 70% reduction of HCFC consumption by 2023 and the integration of HFC phase-down into national climate change targets, but warned that PFAS were a risk for the transition away from HFCs. GABON called for a further intensification of ambition and strengthening of institutions, in particular for combatting illegal trade and fostering energy efficiency. THE GAMBIA referred to its vulnerability to coastal erosion and inundation, and its implementation efforts through seven regional ozone centers.

VENEZUELA praised delegates for mustering the political will to implement the Montreal Protocol and Kigali Amendment, and stressed the need to consider countries' circumstances in the roll-out of licensing systems to combat illegal trade. GUINEA highlighted the country's efforts in phasing down HFCs in the refrigeration and air conditioning sector, and highlighted the creation of a local voluntary carbon market to address emissions in the mining and construction sectors. TANZANIA described national capacity-building and awareness-raising efforts to implement the Protocol, and called for continued resources for Article 5 countries to implement the Kigali Amendment.

Describing the implementation of "full life-cycle" management plans under the Kigali Amendment, CHINA noted that while green development is not easy, we must work together in the spirit of solidarity, mutual trust, and support for the sake of the planet. VIETNAM underlined the need for a comprehensive approach to combatting climate change, shared the adoption of the country's national management plan, and expressed enthusiasm for lessons on implementing energy efficiency.

ETHIOPIA outlined their country's commitment to supporting the Protocol through their climate-resilient green economy strategy and stressed that international collaboration is vital for the implementation of the Protocol and Kigali Amendment. MYANMAR affirmed their commitment to promoting ozone layer protection and conservation, despite challenges related to financing and technical capacity, and highlighted ongoing efforts to ratify the Kigali Amendment.

Contact Groups

Very short-lived substances (VSLs): Heidi Stockhaus (Germany) and Juan Jose Galaeno (Argentina), delegates discussed a proposal requesting parties to submit additional information on VSLs not included in the TEAP's 2024 progress report (draft decision XXXVI/[A]). Some delegations queried whether providing either production or consumption data to the TEAP would be useful for their assessments. A few delegations noted that, since VSLs are not controlled substances under the Protocol, producers are not obligated to report this data. Parties also discussed whether to include reference to specific VSLs, and whether to request, to the extent possible, quantifiable information on VSLs, the methodology used for assessments, growth trends in the VSLs, their ozone depleting potential, and impact on the stratospheric ozone layer. Delegates reached consensus on the draft decision.

Enhancing global and regional atmospheric monitoring of controlled substances: Co-facilitated by Liana Ghahramanyan (Armenia) and Alessandro Giuliano Peru (Italy), delegates further discussed draft decision XXXVI/[C], exploring the funding envelope needed and the process for allocating the funds. They converged around funding the evaluation of sites from the Trust Fund for the Montreal Protocol.

Possible compliance deferral for Article 5, group 2 parties: This contact group, co-facilitated by Cornelius Rhein (EU) and Ana Maria Kleymeyer (FSM), continued discussions on draft decision XXXVI/[F], considering a request to the TEAP to report, by sector, sub-sector, and region on low-GWP alternatives to HFCs. Parties debated whether this reporting should specify low, lower, very low, ultra-low, or zero GWP alternatives, how these terms are defined, and to what extent the draft decision should emphasize Article 5, group 2 parties. Delegates also discussed the extent to which the assessment report should: suggest or include options for addressing challenges and barriers associated with the availability, accessibility, and adoption of HFC alternatives; promote their adoption; and provide information on the cost of adopting alternatives.

Emissions of HFC-23: This contact group, co-facilitated by Shontelle Wellington (Barbados) and Paul Krajnik (Austria), began with one party proposing an alternative draft decision to facilitate discussions. Others preferred to continue making progress on the existing draft. The contact group then completed a first reading of the existing draft decision before beginning their second reading. Divergences remained on what information parties should report. There was disagreement on whether the TEAP and the SAP should issue a revised report further clarifying the possible reasons for the discrepancy between atmospheric monitoring estimates and reported emissions of HFC-23 by parties, and whether a task force should be established to develop technical guidelines for the accounting and reporting of HFC-23 emissions.

In the Corridors

At the HLS, UNEP Deputy Executive Director Elizabeth Mrema quoted Carl Sagan, who described the threat to the ozone layer as a "witch's brew of deadly perils." Yet, the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok was empty of witches, ghosts, skeletons, and pumpkins on this Halloween. However, while the morning's speeches celebrated the successes of the ozone treaty, parties remained haunted by the dangers still posed by the fugitive emissions of HFC-23 and other controlled substances.

Despite the lack of Halloween spirit, delegates felt the looming fright of unfinished work with only one full day left. Reflecting on progress made and remaining work to be done, one delegate noted that "some groups are making greater strides than others." Yet, morale remained high in the corridors, with parties hopeful that negotiations will conclude with more "treats" than "tricks." With this in mind, one delegate fondly commented that "despite disagreements at times, we are an ozone family. Some delegates have been attending this meeting for a long time and there remains a concerted effort to reach our common goal."

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of COP13/MOP36 will be available on Monday, 4 November 2024, at enb.iisd.org/montreal-protocol-ozone-mop36-vienna-convention-cop13