



## Remarks at the Montreal Protocol High-level Segment

### Remarks

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**SECRETARY KERRY:** So I should start right now? I apologize, I gather I was already asked – (laughter) – and there’s nothing like a nice gap between announce and appearance, but good afternoon to everybody here.

And I want to express my personal gratitude for the opportunity to be able to share a few thoughts with everybody. I am really honored to be here. I’m delighted to be here. And I want to thank the president of this Meeting of the Parties, Extraordinary Meeting of the Parties, Canada’s Director General for Environment and Climate Change Virginia Poter, as well as Minister Rupprecht and the Government of Austria for hosting yet again another series of critical diplomatic talks.

I’ve gotten to know this building and this city very, very well, having spent weeks here negotiating, and this is the building in which we announced the successful conclusion of the Iran nuclear agreement, and I expect that you are going to announce a successful conclusion of an agreement leading into Kigali and ultimately Marrakech.

I want to thank our – you’ll excuse me for a little bit of parochialism, but I want to thank the terrific administrator of the U.S. Environment Protection Agency – my friend, Gina McCarthy – who I think has become a friend to many of you here too; and also Ambassador Jennifer Haverkamp, and the entire U.S. delegation for their diligent work.

And I thank every single one of our international partners for being determined to live up to the pledge that we worked hard to achieve in Dubai last fall.

Now, my friends, make no mistake: that pledge matters, and it matters because we really don’t have time to waste. At our nations – as we gather here, a hot summer day in Vienna, I think that we probably all recognize that an awful lot of the world – most of the world – doesn’t know this meeting is taking place. I had a feeling driving through the city that as I was coming over here, most people – the only people who knew we were here were the people who got disrupted by the traffic as I was moving. But I think you share that feeling, and yet – and they don’t really completely understand what we’re trying to accomplish. But the truth is our goal for these talks – amending the Montreal Protocol to phase down HFCs – is one of the single most important unitary steps that we could possibly take at this moment to stave off the worst impacts of climate change and to protect the future for people in every single corner of the globe.

Yesterday, I met in Washington with 45 nations – defense ministers and foreign ministers – as we were working together on the challenge of Daesh, ISIL, and terrorism. It’s hard for some people to grasp it, but what we – you – are doing here right now is of equal importance because it has the ability to literally save life on the planet itself. Week after week, month after month, year after year, we continue to see new evidence, scientific evidence, tangible evidence, of the danger that climate change poses to life on our planet. Last year was the hottest year in recorded history by far. Last month, the hottest month recorded. The month before that was the hottest month recorded. 2016 is on track to be hotter than last year. And the decade was the hottest decade in history, and the decade before that the second hottest in history, and the decade before that the third hottest in history.

At some point, rational human beings have to stop and begin to understand and take this in and recognize that we have to take action. I was in Greenland just last month with my good friend Borge Brende of Norway, the foreign minister, and I flew right over – very low over an ice fjord from which the glacier flow is 86 million metric tons of ice each day dumping into a fjord to move into the ocean south and melt. That daily, added through the year, is enough to meet the needs – all the needs – of

New York City, a gigantic city, for two decades.

It's happening. Climate change is happening and it's happening faster than most of us anticipated. And when I say, "faster than most of us anticipated," I was in that Senate hearing room in 1988 when Jim Hansen first warned us that it's here and it's happening now. That was '88. And then we gathered in Rio in '92 and we tried to voluntarily move forward and make a difference. Last year, many of you were in Paris when we all joined in that unbelievable moment of the gavel coming down and people realizing what we had accomplished – all together, multilaterally, 186, 190 nations – the most ambitious climate agreement in history, an agreement that we all have an interest to bring into force as soon as possible.

But the Paris agreement is not a silver bullet. It doesn't guarantee we're going to get where we need to go. It opens up the opportunity and it's an invitation and it's an instigation. It wasn't meant to be the silver bullet. It was meant to send an unmistakable signal to everybody in the world – to the private sector, to the governments at every level, to citizens in every country – that the whole world understands the enormity of the climate threat, and that we are all prepared, as we must be, to take the necessary steps to address it.

Now, everyone in this room knows what global cooperation can accomplish. It's why we're here today. In the 1980s, I remember that many scientists feared that ozone depletion was irreversible and the headlines in many newspapers declared that nations were powerless to stem the growing loss of ozone – the great hole in the ozone that threatened us all.

But the Montreal Protocol proved that the pessimists and the naysayers were wrong. Virtually all the parties have met their obligations under the accord. Nearly 100 of the most ozone-depleting substances have been phased out. And as a result, the hole in the ozone is shrinking and on its way to repair. And we also know that the economies of all those countries still continue to grow. We created jobs. We were able to improve the quality of life for our citizens.

Now, that's the good news. The bad news is that in too many cases, the substances banned by the Montreal Protocol have been replaced by hydrofluorocarbons – HFCs – which are safer for ozone, but are exceptionally potent drivers of climate change – thousands of times more potent, for example, than CO<sub>2</sub>.

And the use of hydrofluorocarbons is unfortunately growing. Already, the HFCs used in refrigerators, air conditioners, inhalers, and other items are emitting an entire gigaton of carbon dioxide-equivalent pollution into the atmosphere annually. Now, if that sounds like a lot, my friends, it's because it is. It's the equivalent to emissions from nearly 300 coal-fired power plants every single year.

In Paris, we, the world, came together to set a goal of limiting the Earth's warming to well below the magical number of 2 degrees centigrade and we even dared to suggest we try to get to 1.5. Amending the Montreal Protocol, my friends, to phase down HFC could help us avoid a full one half of a degree centigrade in that challenge. It is an enormous proportion of what we are trying to achieve. The magnitude of this single action that we have come here to try to (inaudible) cannot be overstated.

In the fight against climate change, even modest wins don't come every day and they certainly don't come in the quality and quantity of this one. If we can come together to adopt the phasedown amendment that our nations have been discussing for years, that would be a very big win.

And we are actually well on our way to achieving it. As parties to the Montreal Protocol, we have already agreed on the need to address HFCs, we've already agreed that an amendment to the protocol is the way to do it, and we've already agreed that 2016 is the year to make that happen. Here in Vienna, we've already generated solutions to major challenges that the parties identified last fall in Dubai.

So today, we have in front of us the full skeleton of what we're working towards. And together, we can achieve an outcome that includes an early freeze date, rapid action to phase down HFC use, and additional funding for countries that need it through the Multilateral Fund – all of which will help promote energy-efficient technologies that use climate-friendly alternatives to HFCs.

My friends, to delay further action after the remarkable progress that we have already made, would be simply irresponsible. Now, why? Well, it would in very real ways slow down the momentum that we have been building towards for a safer, more sustainable, more prosperous future for the planet.

And I wanted to come to Vienna this week because I want you to know there cannot be a shadow of doubt about where the United States of America stands on this. We are all in. We're committed to progress – progress here, success in Kigali, and to accelerating the effort to address climate change in our country and around the world.

And I want to underscore we're already doing that. Our goal was 17 percent reduction out of Paris. We're already above 10

percent because of the moves that we've been making in our domestic Climate Action Plan that President Obama has put in place.

And I want to underscore that what we understand – that while an HFC phasedown amendment is a critical piece of the climate puzzle, it doesn't mean it's going to be easy to implement. It is challenging. We know that.

But the reason the Montreal Protocol has been so successful is because cooperation is at its core. Under its provisions, no country has been expected to go it alone and no country has had to go it alone. Remember that as you think about what we're talking about here.

We know that not every country has the same needs. Not every country has the same capacity. That's why flexibility matters in what we do and it's why, for example, we have already agreed to include accommodation for countries with high ambient temperatures. In the last two days, I have talked personally with his royal highness, the deputy crown prince of Saudi Arabia, who agreed that we need to try to move forward, and we had a good conversation about it. And we know we can deal with countries that have a high ambient challenge. I also talked just yesterday with his excellency the prime minister of Pakistan, and Pakistan had agreed with us and agrees that we must move forward with respect to this.

We know that some nations are particularly worried about the costs that may come along with a phasedown. We understand that. People – it's a legitimate concern. There are countries for whom there are daunting cost challenges. And that is exactly why the Multilateral Fund exists – to assist countries in implementing their protocol obligations. And I ask you to keep in mind a couple of things: One, just look at the record of the Multilateral Fund. It has done what it said it would do. It has constantly been available in the amounts that were promised. The United States and our G7 partners, along with Nordic nations, together account for about 75 percent of the fund's donor base, and every single one of our leaders of that 75 percent have already stated our intent, our promise – publicly – to provide additional funding to help developing countries implementing an HFC amendment.

And in the end, it is critical to remember that, when it comes to investing in solutions, rebuilding after – for instance, rebuilding after extreme weather events. We spent \$230 billion in the last year cleaning up after just eight storms. Imagine if we had put 100 billion of the 230 ahead of time into what you need to do for prevention and for alternatives. Massive increases have been seen in the cost of maintaining infrastructure to control flooding, to withstand storms; power outages; labor productivity losses due to extreme heat. That is what every single one of us will face. If you think the cost of trying to do this is prohibitive, think about the cost of trying to move a whole nation if you're an island state in the Pacific – think about the costs that will come as cyclones and tornadoes and every form of fire, weather, flood begins to more prominently present itself as a yearly, annual, monthly challenge to nation after nation.

My friends, in 1987, the parties to the Montreal Protocol demonstrated an unprecedented level of cooperation in the face of an unprecedented challenge back then. I had the privilege of being in the United States Senate when we voted to ratify the amendment, 1988, under then-President Ronald Reagan. I know what – how tough it was. But what we have seen since then is cooperation – cooperation that has continued to this very day in helping us to overcome every single one of the hurdles that people were throwing up as a reason not to do it. And as a result, we've created jobs, citizens have better health, we live a higher quality of life, and we have begun to meet our generational responsibility to the future, to our children and grandchildren, to leave them with a world that is sustainable.

Last year in Dubai, the parties pledged their cooperation once again, to address yet another great challenge. By joining together to fulfill that commitment, by adopting an amendment to phase down the use of HFCs, we can honor the legacy of our predecessors, we can move closer to the goals we set in Paris, and – more importantly – we can help protect the future of the only planet that we have.

I know you're committed; you wouldn't be here if you weren't. And I know you've already spent long days and nights trying to make this work, and we are very, very grateful to each and every one of you for that. I know that the wheels of diplomacy can sometimes turn much too slowly for any of our liking – and I know it can be frustrating – but I also know that there is not a cause more worthy in our time than the world that our children and grandchildren will inherit.

This is a way for us to answer the cynicism of the nihilists who are out there attacking civilization itself. This is a chance for us to prove to people that we understand our responsibility, that we're willing to accept it, that public people, governments, governance, can work in the interests of people – not the few, but the broad population of the world. And there are few opportunities in life when anyone in public life gets to make the kind of difference that we all get to make with this choice.

So the way forward is marked; let's go on ahead. And to use the words that have driven my President, my boss, all these years and the American people: Yes, we can. Yes, you can. Let's get this done. Thank you. (Applause.)

