

Thirtieth Anniversary of the Montreal Protocol: President Christian calls for unity, commitment, and strong political will.

Palikir, Pohnpei: His Excellency Peter M. Christian, President of the FSM, returned this week from delivering a keynote address at the 30th Anniversary meeting of the Montreal Protocol held last week in Montreal, Canada. The international treaty was forged in 1997 to address the global crisis of ozone depletion caused by the release of gases into the atmosphere used in various industrial sectors ranging from air-conditioning and refrigeration to aerosol and pharmaceutical production.



Peter Christian, President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)
Courtesy Photo: IISD Reporting Services

In his address to the 197 countries represented in the hall, President Christian stated:

“This environmental treaty proves to the world, that when faced with complex challenges, where products and materials used for economic activities threaten human and environmental health and well-being our global community is smart enough, committed enough, and capable enough to pair knowledge with political will to find solutions; That we are still sanely human, and still care for each other.”

In 2009, FSM proposed an amendment to this historic treaty to include a powerful greenhouse gas called hydrofluorocarbon (HFC), which is also used in the refrigeration and air conditioning industries, in the scope of its work. Initially the proposal met with much resistance, in part because the Montreal Protocol (MP) was originally intended to address only ozone depleting gases. Nonetheless, the FSM did not relent. In the lead-up to the 2015 Sustainable Development Summit, FSM secured a commitment from countries in the Pacific Islands Development Forum to support the proposal. Also in 2015, FSM added a focus on energy efficiency to the Island States HFC amendment proposal under the MP and began an advocacy campaign to secure major energy efficiency gains in refrigeration and air conditioning equipment concomitant with any agreed HFC phase down. In 2016, prior to the adoption of the amendment, FSM hosted the Pacific Islands Forum and secured a commitment from all countries in attendance to amend the

MP to phase down HFCs. All actions, which were instrumental in building consensus and providing the political will, led to the success in Kigali. It took eight years until at the annual Meeting of the Parties in 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda all countries agreed to include HFCs under the Protocol's work in what is now known as the "Kigali Amendment".

President Christian was accompanied in Montreal by Senator Alik L. Alik, Chairman of the Special Committee on Climate Change, Secretary Joses Gallen, Secretary Andrew Yatilman, Chief of Staff Leo A. Falcam, Jr., Program Manager and National Ozone Officer Tilson Kephas, Yap Congressional Delegation staff, Mr. Andy Choor, and FSM climate change and ozone advisers from the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development (IGSD), a non-governmental organization based in Washington, D.C.

The head of the FSM negotiating team, Secretary Andrew Yatilman of the newly created Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management, attended the high-level segment of the meeting and also liaised bilaterally with Minister Catherine McKenna, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of Canada, on a variety of crucial global environmental issues.



President Christian praised the membership of the treaty for their hard work and valor in achieving the Kigali Amendment. If achieved to its fullest potential, phasing down the use of HFCs worldwide while also incorporating energy efficiency measures, the world may avert an additional one (1) degree Celsius of warming. The climate change benefits of the Amendment could mean averting the worst-case scenario for island states, hence why President Christian urged countries in Montreal:

“Let us not ask whether the Amendment can prevent half a degree of warming protection by phasing down HFCs, or whether another half a degree can be attained from additional energy efficiency measures. Rather, it should be a question of **how soon** we can achieve both. No goal is unattainable within the desired time when everyone believes together, plans together, and works together.”

President Christian's words echoed through the large plenary hall and were met with great applause and appreciation. Many parties commented later what a show of dedication and commitment he showed on behalf of his country to speak in person at this event.

At the opening of the anniversary celebration event on Thursday evening, the Executive Secretary of the Montreal Protocol took a special moment to recognize the FSM's role in initiating the process leading to the Kigali Amendment and praised the country's leadership, vision, and persistence. The international environmental media service, Earth Negotiation Bulletin wrote, “Peter M. Christian, President, FSM noted the Montreal Protocol is proof that when knowledge and political will are combined it is possible to make a difference.”

The Federated States of Micronesia was awarded a certificate of appreciation by the UN Environment Ozone Secretariat for its commitment and contribution to the achievements of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Additionally, the FSM flag was raised along with twenty other State Party flags at the anniversary celebration in recognition of the first twenty (20) Parties to the Montreal Protocol to ratify the Kigali Amendment. As a condition for entry into force of the Kigali Amendment on 1 January 2019, at least twenty instruments of ratification, acceptance or approval of the Amendment have to be deposited by States or regional economic integration organizations that are Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

