

Marshall Islands first to ratify HFC greenhouse gas deal

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The beach at Majuro in the Marshall Islands

The Marshall Islands, a Pacific archipelago highly exposed to climate-induced sea level rise, said Tuesday it was the first country to ratify a global pact to phase out planet-warming gases called HFCs.

The Kigali Amendment on ending hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) was agreed by nearly 200 countries in the Rwandan capital last October, after years of talks. It must be officially ratified by 20 nations to enter into force.

"My country will not survive without urgent action to cut emissions by every country and every sector of our economies, including HFCs," President Hilda Heine said in a statement after parliament approved ratification of the amendment to the 1987 Montreal Protocol.

The Montreal accord phased out production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in refrigerators, aerosols, air conditioners and foam insulation when it was discovered they damaged the ozone layer shielding Earth from dangerous ultraviolet

rays.

HFCs were rolled out in the 1990s to replace CFCs.

But it turned out that HFCs—while safe for the now-healing ozone—were thousands of times more potent at trapping heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas blamed for climate change.

The world's nations agreed in Paris in 2015 to limit average global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels in a treaty that the Marshall Islands was also among the first to ratify.

Capping temperature rise can be achieved mainly by curbing greenhouse gases emitted by burning coal, oil and gas.

Experts say eliminating HFCs—not covered by the Paris Agreement—could help prevent as much as 0.5 C of warming.

"We now need others to quickly do the same," said Heine of her country's ratification.

"This deal is good for our people, the planet, and the profits of those that follow in our footsteps."

Many fear America's withdrawal from the hard-fought Paris Agreement—a campaign promise by President Donald Trump—could undermine strong action on curbing [climate change](#).

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