

As the campaign seems to get more and more awful, I thought you might like to hear some good news. Behind the tumult of the campaign, there has been real progress in addressing climate change in the U.S. and around the world. In particular, there were four major advances just this month.

The first is that the Paris Agreement is about to go into effect. Before that could happen, the Agreement had to be ratified by at least 55 countries accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 % of total global greenhouse gas emissions. That was accomplished on October 4, and the agreement will go into force on November 4.

Second, after much fussing and foot-dragging, we now have a global agreement on emissions from airplanes. At a meeting in Montreal, the 191-nation International Civil Aviation Organization reached agreement on October 6 to deal with the rapidly growing problem of aviation emissions peak.. Airlines will be required to have offsets for any increase in their emissions after 2020. The Montreal vote is an important first step toward controlling this rapidly growing source of CO₂.

Speaking of Montreal, the Montreal Protocol, which was originally designed to protect the ozone layer, will now address climate change as well. On October 14, an international conference in Rwanda reached agreement to extend the Protocol to a new group of chemicals, chlorofluorocarbons (HFCs). HFCs are ultra-strong greenhouse gases. They were intended to replace CFCs as coolants, because CFCs are destructive to the ozone layer. But HFCs are potent greenhouse gases, causing a thousand times more warming than CO₂. The big problem is that CFCs stay in the atmosphere a very long, continuing to cause warming. Under the agreement, HFC levels will be cut 80-85% by 2047. Industry is starting to move toward more climate-friendly coolants, and the new agreement will sharply accelerate the move.

The fourth piece of good news: the U.S. Energy Information Administration reported on October 4 that CO₂ emissions from U.S. energy use the lowest in 25 years during the first six months of 2016. GDP and employment have been growing, but carbon is going the opposite direction.

Any one of these four developments would be headline news, but they've been crowded out by the election. They provide reason to hope that the fight against climate change is starting to develop real momentum. In terms of climate policy, this has been a great October. It builds on other accomplishments in September, like the passage of SB 32 in California, which requires that emissions be slashed 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, and the oral argument over the EPA Clean Power Plan, which appeared to go well. Stay tuned

for further developments!