



UNEP tells Durban negotiators fast action on black carbon and other air pollutants can cut rate of global warming in half

"Possibly the only way of slowing down climate change in the medium term"

Durban, South Africa, 9 December 2011 – The rate of global warming can be cut almost in half over the next 30 to 60 years with a package of 16 fast-action mitigation measures that reduce two local air pollutants, black carbon soot and ground-level ozone, according to Joseph Alcamo, UNEP's chief scientist, who set out a fast-action mitigation plan yesterday during the climate negotiations.

Fast action to cut these two local air pollutants will deliver benefits for health and crops, as well as climate, and largely in regions making the cuts, added Achim Steiner, UNEP's Executive Director, who moderated the presentation, which included ministers from Sweden, Mexico, Ghana, and Canada.

"UNEP's fast-action agenda is even more important today, and for the next few decades, as prospects recede further into the future for a binding climate agreement," stated Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development, who is advising various participants at the Durban climate negotiations, which are expected to conclude tonight with limited results.

Achim Steiner agreed, "I can't see anything in these negotiations that will prevent warming beyond two degrees. We have to find a way to break the impasse."

"UNEP has shown us the tools to fight near-term climate impacts to protect the world's most vulnerable people from the worst climate impacts," added Zaelke. The Swedish environment minister, Lena Ek, who also participated in the UNEP briefing, agreed, noting that UNEP's fast-action agenda "is possibly the only way of slowing down climate change in the medium term."

Up to fifty percent of UNEP's control measures can be implemented at a net cost savings, including measures such as replacing traditional biomass burning stoves with modern efficient stoves and capturing landfill methane. The measures can prevent two million premature deaths a year, mainly women and children. More than 80% of the health benefits will be in Asia.

Dr. Alcamo explained that cutting these local air pollutants can cut the rate of warming in the Arctic by two-thirds, reducing the risk of passing predicted tipping points for irreversible and possibly catastrophic climate impacts

Two UNEP reports support their fast-action mitigation agenda:

An integrated science assessment: http://www.unep.org/dewa/Portals/67/pdf/BlackCarbon_SDM.pdf

A policy analysis for action: <http://www.unep.org/publications/ebooks/SLCF/>

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