



Contact: Nathan Borgford-Parnell: +1.202.338.1300, NBorgford-Parnell@igsd.org

Universal Support in Rio for Phase-Down of HFCs for Climate Protection

Bill Clinton, Mayor Bloomberg join Climate & Clean Air Coalition to help reduce short-lived methane

Rio de Janeiro, 22 June 2012 – While Rio+20 was disappointing on many fronts, the efforts to reduce short-lived climate pollutants moved forward with the final declaration, *The Future We Want*, supporting the phase down of factory-made super-greenhouse gases HFCs.

Further progress came when former President Bill Clinton and New York Mayor Bloomberg announced that their C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, a coalition of 59 major cities around the world, was joining forces with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants, launched by Secretary Hillary Clinton in February.

Their joint effort is aimed at cutting methane, another short-lived climate pollutant, from urban landfills. The amount of methane-producing garbage is projected to double over the next 15 years, making urban landfill methane a top target for the C40 cities.

Former President Bill Clinton spoke via video conference, explaining the near-term climate benefit of addressing short-lived climate pollutants:

"As we all know methane, black carbon, and hydrofluorocarbons clear the atmosphere much quicker than carbon dioxide. We need both these strategies, those that cut CO₂ and those that produce the fastest results by cutting other pollutions. If we focused on the methane, the black carbon, the hydrofluorocarbons we can reduce the rate of climate change for the next thirty years by half and reduce the change in the Arctic by up to two-thirds. That's why the Secretary of State has worked so hard on this issue and why she's coming to Rio to push it."

These pollutants are known as short-lived climate pollutants because they remain in the air to warm the Earth for only a few days to a decade and a half. Black carbon also is a significant air pollutant, as is the tropospheric ozone that methane contributes to. Together, they kill millions every year and seriously damage crops. Reducing black carbon, methane, and HFCs also can provide critical protection for the Arctic, Himalayas, and other vulnerable regions.

In her remarks today at the plenary session in Rio, Secretary Clinton added:

"[E]arlier this year, I was privileged to host six countries in the United Nations Environment Program as we launched the Climate and Clean Air Coalition. The goal is to reduce short-lived climate pollutants that cause more than 30 percent of current global warming, as well as millions of premature deaths and extensive crop losses. We know we have to keep working together on CO₂, but we think that our Climate and Clean Air Coalition, to which many more countries are joining, and we welcome you, can take targeted action and produce results with respect to methane and black soot and HFCs."

The Coalition is comprised of 15 countries, plus the UN Environment Program, the World Bank, and the European Commission. Secretary Clinton also noted the related Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, "which aims to help 100 million families adopt clean cookstoves and fuels by 2020."

“The Rio declarations support for phasing down HFCs is the first universal recognition of the need to protect the climate by phasing down HFCs, super-greenhouse gases that molecule for molecule warm the climate hundreds to thousands of times more than carbon dioxide”, said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute of Governance & Sustainable, a leading advocacy group on fast action to cut the short-lived climate pollutants.

HFCs are factory-made chemicals used in refrigeration and insulating foams. Due to the growing demand for air conditioning in a warming world and to the ongoing phase-out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons under the Montreal Protocol, HFCs are the fastest growing climate pollutant in many countries including the US. Globally HFCs are growing 10% to 15% per year, in China and India by 20% per year, and in the US by nearly 9% between 2009 and 2010.

Without fast action to limit this accelerating growth, the climate warming caused by HFCs could equal nearly 20% of the warming caused by CO₂ by 2050, or about the same as current annual emissions from transport, and up to 40% of carbon dioxide warming if CO₂ emissions are limited in line with present international goals.

Because HFCs remain in the atmosphere for only a short time—an average of 15 years compared to CO₂, a quarter of which remains for thousands of years—reducing HFCs produces fast climate protection.

Zaelke added that “Phasing down HFCs is the biggest, fastest, cheapest piece of climate mitigation available to the world in the next few years, and it should be done immediately, and under the Montreal Protocol, the world’s most effective environmental treaty.”

Proposals to amend the Montreal Protocol to phase down HFCs have been presented by the Federated States of Micronesia, as well as the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The proposals would reduce 85% of HFC production and use, and produce climate mitigation equivalent to 100 billion tonnes of CO₂ by 2050. The Montreal Protocol treaty has already phased out nearly 100 chemicals similar to HFCs and set the stratospheric ozone layer on the path to mid-century recovery, while providing critical climate mitigation as well.

More than 100 Parties to the Montreal Protocol have previously supported action on HFCs, but Brazil, China, and India had, at least until now, held up agreement under that treaty. “The global consensus in Rio shows that momentum is building for a phase-down of HFCs, which inevitably will be through the Montreal Protocol,” said Zaelke.

Zaelke further stated, “Former President Clinton and Secretary Hillary Clinton produced a one, two punch in Rio aimed at cutting HFCs, black carbon, and methane, as a complement to critical cuts in CO₂.”

The *Rio+20 Declaration* is [here](#). (See paragraph 222 on HFC phase-down.)

The methane announcement by the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group is [here](#).

President Bill Clinton’s speech at C40 in Rio is [here](#) (SLCPs at 28:45; full speech starts 22:55).

Secretary Clinton’s plenary speech is [here](#) (cook stoves at 6:40; SLCP Coalition at 7:48).

The Micronesian Montreal Protocol proposed amendment is [here](#); the North American one is [here](#).