



Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development

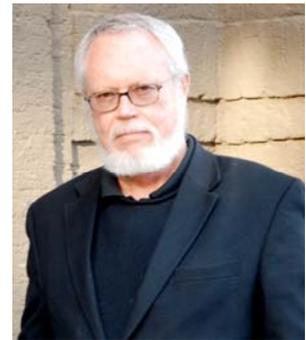
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Copenhagen Climate Talks
Islands Make Progress on Non-CO₂ Strategies,
The Fast, Forgotten 50% of Climate Warming

Copenhagen, Denmark, December 21, 2009 – Island States gained ground at the climate talks in Copenhagen for their fast-action campaign to reduce non-CO₂ forcers, including hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) and black carbon, which are responsible for 50% of climate forcing. The fast-action strategies were among key issues still being negotiated before the heads of government arrived, and that were carried forward to next year’s negotiations.

“While the accord negotiated in the closing hours by a small number of heads of government, including China, India, and the US, is a disappointment to many—in process, form, and content—others will see the full engagement by heads of government as a milestone in climate policy,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development. “The true value of the accord depends on the follow-up.”



Durwood Zaelke, IGSD

A key aspect of follow up, according to Zaelke, is the “fast, forgotten 50% of warming caused by non-CO₂ gases and aerosols. Not only do non-CO₂ pollutants make up half of warming, they are the half that can be solved quickly. Cuts in CO₂ are essential but won’t result in cooling benefits for up to 1,000 years. The islands have recognized the urgent need for fast, near-term solutions, in addition to CO₂ reductions.”

A new paper by Nobel Laureate Mario Molina, Zaelke, and others published on the opening day of the Copenhagen conference explains the importance of the non-CO₂ approach for reducing risk of passing temperature tipping points for abrupt and irreversible climate changes. The paper appears in the *Special Feature* of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* on climate tipping points edited by Professor John Schellnhuber. Molina, Zaelke, and other co-authors, including black carbon expert Professor V. Ramanathan of the Scripps Institution at the University of California, San Diego, calculate that fast action on the non-CO₂ 50% could offset as much as 40 years worth of CO₂ emissions, and delay the time when dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system would otherwise be reached.

Molina and colleagues point to further support for the non-CO₂ agenda in the 2009 [G8 Leaders Declaration](#), which commits to fast-action to reduce black carbon and hydrofluorocarbons; the 2009 [North American Leaders Declaration](#), which commits to reducing HFCs under the Montreal Protocol; the 2009 [Tromsø Declaration](#) by the Arctic Council which highlights the negative effects of black carbon, methane, and tropospheric ozone on Arctic snow and ice; and in two editorials published in 2009 by *Nature*, which [emphasize the importance of looking beyond CO₂](#) and endorse

[fast, near-term mitigation](#) opportunities to avoid abrupt climate change, including strategies to reduce HFCs and black carbon and other short-lived climate forcers..

Lead by the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), island States are promoting two related fast-action strategies under the UN climate convention. The first is to launch a work program on fast-action mitigation immediately. Emissions of black carbon, methane, and tropospheric ozone – all short-lived climate forcers - would be targeted under the work program to yield significant near-term benefits. The importance of addressing black carbon for a number of reasons including its significant contributions to climate change, ice melt, and respiratory diseases, is gaining steady support: last week, Nancy Sutley, head of the U.S. Council on Environmental Quality, announced a [US \\$5 million fund](#) to begin reducing black carbon emissions in the Arctic.

The work program also promotes using carbon-negative technologies, such as biosequestration through biochar, in order to bring CO₂ levels back down to 350 ppm and to avoid the consequences of passing tipping points for abrupt climate change.

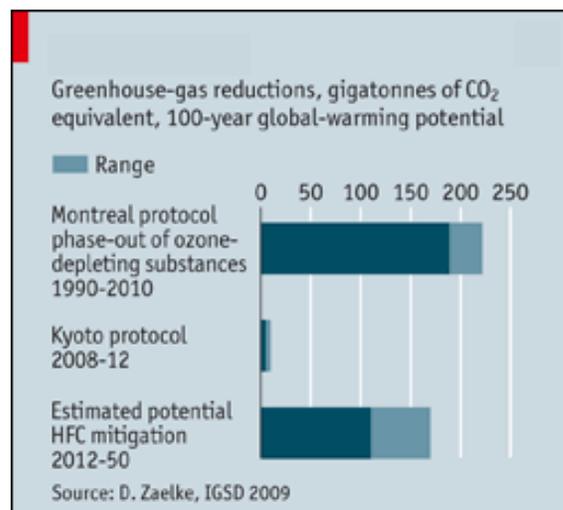


Ambassador Masao Nakayama, Micronesia

“Failure to mitigate emissions is pushing us closer to climate tipping points like the melting of large ice shelves,” said Ambassador Masao Nakayama, Permanent Representative from FSM to the United Nations and member of the FSM delegation in Copenhagen. “Islands like Micronesia are already experiencing sea level rise, and it will continue unless we take serious and fast action on near-term solutions, including going carbon-negative.”

The second fast-action strategy proposed by the islands is to eliminate production and consumption of one of the six greenhouse gases—hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs—using the Montreal Protocol ozone treaty. The Montreal Protocol is widely regarded as the best environmental treaty, having already phased out 96 other chemicals similar to HFCs, which in addition to rescuing the ozone layer, also resulted in up to 222 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent in climate mitigation between 1990 and 2010.

Al Gore highlighted the [successful Montreal Protocol](#) in his speech to delegates in Copenhagen last Tuesday. Over its 22 years the ozone treaty has demonstrated how much can be accomplished through a multilateral agreement when all Parties, both developed and developing, are supported through timely assessments of science, technology and economics, a fair financial system that pays the full incremental cost for developing country Parties, and that has mandatory phase-outs for all Parties that lead to quick and cost-effective transitions to ozone- and climate-friendly substitutes, with a grace period for developing countries.



Phasing out production and consumption of HFCs under the Montreal Protocol would result in climate benefits of up to 170 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent by 2050. The Montreal Protocol’s potential to produce yet another significant win on climate was highlighted by recent articles in [The Economist](#) and [Los Angeles Times](#). FSM, Mauritius, the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, along with other

supporters of an HFC phase-down under the ozone treaty, are looking to next year's Montreal Protocol meetings to reach agreement.



Romina Picolotti, former Minister of Environment, Argentina

“The Parties are beginning to realize that these fast-action strategies are low-hanging fruit that can, and should, be picked now if we expect to save not only the islands, but the rest of the world from the catastrophic and likely irreversible consequences that are fast approaching,” said Romina Picolotti, former Minister of Environment of Argentina.

“For the first time in history the environment is at the top of the political agendas of world leaders,” added Picolotti. “Climate change has graduated in Copenhagen and is now playing in the big leagues jointly with national security and the economy. We can only hope that our political leaders are up to the challenge and behave responsibly with the fate of the Planet and all citizens of the world in their hands.”

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