



Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development

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Kyoto Mechanism Failing to Curb ‘Super Greenhouse Gas’ Emissions

Washington, DC, February 1, 2010 – Extraordinary growth in the super greenhouse gas HFC-23 may be evidence of a failure in governance and compliance under the Kyoto Protocol and its Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and is strong reason for the successful Montreal Protocol ozone treaty to take charge of a production phase-down to complement climate mitigation under Kyoto.

A new study by scientists who serve on the Montreal Protocol’s Scientific and Technology Assessment Panels published in the January 29 issue of the Journal *Geophysical Research Letters* documents that HFC-23 emissions have grown far faster than should have occurred. Moreover, only 43% are being destroyed under the Kyoto CDM mechanism. It is also possible that some companies receiving financing under the Kyoto CDM to destroy HFC-23 are not complying.

Dr. Stephen Montzka of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and his co-authors calculate global emissions of roughly 13,500 metric tons of HFC-23 annually between 2006 and 2008 – a rate that is nearly 50 percent higher than it was in the 1990s. About 11,000 of the annual 13,500 metric tons came from developing countries.

HFC-23 is an unwanted byproduct of the production of another greenhouse gas, HCFC-22, which is used as a refrigerant in air conditioners and refrigerators and as a feedstock for other chemicals, but is scheduled for an accelerated phase-out under the Montreal Protocol. Over 100 years, 1 pound of HFC-23 is 14,800 times more powerful than 1 pound of CO₂ in changing the climate.

“These HFC-23 emissions are entirely unnecessary and are pushing the Earth toward unmanageable climate impacts,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of IGSD, and Director of the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement. “It’s time for all HFC production to be brought under the Montreal Protocol, a treaty with a near perfect record for compliance and enforcement and the only international environmental treaty where every country in the world is a member.”

Last year, the Montreal Protocol Parties considered proposals submitted by the Federated States of Micronesia and Mauritius (jointly), and the US, Mexico, and Canada (jointly), that would phase down the production and consumption of HFCs under that treaty, leaving emissions in the Kyoto basket of gases. Deliberations on the issue are expected to continue this year. Further discussions are expected this year.

[Recent increases in global HFC-23 emissions](#) (*Geophysical Research Letters*) by S.A. Montzka, L. Kuijpers, M.O. Battle, M. Aydin, K. Verhulst, E.S. Saltzman, D.W. Fahey. See also [Authors’ Fact Sheet](#).

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