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## **Early Action on HFCs Needed for Win on Climate**

Washington, D.C., June 22, 2009 – One of the biggest and most effective climate mitigation strategies was just confirmed today by an international team of scientists. Dr. Guus Velders of The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency and lead author of the article published in the *[Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#)*, stated:

“Our team of scientists calculates that HFCs present a significant threat to the world’s efforts to stabilize climate emissions. Because of the projected growth of these climate warming chemicals, they could represent up to 45% of total global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050 under a scenario that stabilizes CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at 450 ppm. Preventing strong growth in HFC use is a important climate mitigation option the world has now. Our 2007 PNAS paper on the climate benefits of the Montreal Protocol shows how powerful the stratospheric ozone treaty has been in reducing CFCs, HCFCs, and other chemicals similar to HFCs.”

Some HFCs can be up to 11,000 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> in warming the atmosphere. Such a dramatic increase in HFCs will threaten efforts to curb climate change unless a production and consumption phase-down schedule is established in both developed and developing countries.

“The projected rapid growth of HFCs is a serious concern that deserves the attention of policymakers now,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development. “If we don’t take out HFCs, we could win the CO<sub>2</sub> battle, and still lose the climate war.”

HFCs, although regulated under the Kyoto Protocol, were originally developed as substitutes for ozone-depleting HCFCs since they have no impact on the ozone layer. After recognizing the climate impacts of HCFCs in early 2007, the Montreal Protocol Parties agreed to accelerate the phaseout of HCFCs in order to avoid up to 16 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-eq by 2040. However, unless climate and ozone-friendly substitutes are introduced in place of HFCs, the HFC emissions will cancel out the climate benefits of that historic decision.

The accelerated phase-out decision and other new developments mean that previous scenarios significantly underestimate the growth of HFC use and emissions. By 2050, developing country HFC emissions are estimated to be 800% greater than in developed countries.

The report notes however, that if a global consumption cap followed by 4% annual reductions in consumptions is implemented, radiative forcing would peak near 2040 and begin to decline,

resulting in mitigation of 70-113 GtCO<sub>2</sub>-eq. through 2050.

Because HFCs have a much shorter atmospheric lifetime than CO<sub>2</sub>, taking aggressive action now could be the key to avoiding tipping points for abrupt climate change, which threatens a myriad of vulnerable nations, including island and coastal countries in danger of disappearing with rising sea levels.

One possible solution for quick and successful mitigation of HFCs is to regulate them under the Montreal Protocol, which The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Mauritius called for in April of this year with the submission of a formal proposal to the Protocol Secretariat. The U.S. did not submit a proposal, but is still considering such a strategy on HFCs.

The Montreal Protocol Parties will host a dialogue next month in Geneva where representatives from both the Montreal Protocol and the UNFCCC will discuss the possibilities for collaboration on this issue.

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