



**\*\*For Immediate Release\*\***

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## **Black Carbon Presents Key Opportunity for U.S.-China Cooperation on Climate Change, Health**

Washington, D.C., May 12, 2009 – Reducing black carbon emissions could be part of the solution to two major problems plaguing China, said experts participating in an event today organized by the Woodrow Wilson Center’s China Environment Forum. The discussion focused on opportunities for the U.S. and China to work together on solving some of the health and environment issues that have been a result of the country’s rapid economic development.

Black carbon, the dark soot that comes from old diesel vehicles and burning biomass for cooking, contributes to millions of respiratory-related deaths every year in the region. In addition to its detrimental impact on health, black carbon is also the second greatest contributor to global warming after CO<sub>2</sub>, doing its damage in two ways: while in the atmosphere, the black aerosol particles absorb heat; when the particulates fall, they darken the surfaces of snow and ice. The darker surfaces then absorb instead of reflect the sun’s rays, accelerating ice melt and contributing to a dangerous feedback cycle.

“Black carbon is threatening billions of lives on multiple fronts and it is important for the U.S. and China to lead on reduction efforts,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development. “Reducing black carbon emissions and other non-CO<sub>2</sub> climate forcers like HFCs, methane and tropospheric ozone will help us avoid abrupt climate change and buy time to put a long-term climate strategy in place.” Zaelke spoke about the opportunity for the two countries to work together on such “fast-action” strategies which would improve air quality and health while also delaying abrupt climate change and the disappearance of critical ice masses. A recent study presented evidence that black carbon is responsible for almost 50% of Arctic warming and another showed that black carbon reduces springtime Eurasian snow cover almost as much as CO<sub>2</sub>. This includes the Hindu-Kush-Himalaya-Tibetan Plateau which is the headwaters for most of the major rivers in Asia, the central source of fresh water for billions of people.

Robert O’Keefe, Vice President of the Health Effects Institute in Boston, also emphasized the importance of addressing air pollutants such as black carbon and tropospheric ozone in order to reap the co-benefits of improved public health and significant climate mitigation in the near-term. Denise Mauzerall, a professor at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, noted that it would be very difficult to limit global temperature rise to 2°C without tackling black carbon. Because black carbon only stays in the atmosphere for a few days to a few weeks, aggressive action will produce almost immediate results. However,

reductions in black carbon and other non-CO<sub>2</sub> forcers must complement, not replace, aggressive cuts in CO<sub>2</sub> which are essential to long-term stabilization of the global climate system.

The U.S. has already taken initial steps on black carbon, most recently with a bill introduced on Earth Day by Sens. Tom Carper (D-Del), Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and John Kerry (D-Mass.). A black carbon bill was also introduced in the House of Representatives in March by Congressmen Inslee, Welch, and Honda, and Congressmen Waxman and Markey have a separate provision on black carbon in their climate discussion draft.

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