



Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

Contact: Alex Viets, IGSD: +1.213.321.0911, aviets@igsd.org

Business-As-Usual Emissions of CO₂ Pushing World Past Climate Tipping Point

Fast action needed for near-term mitigation

Washington, DC, July 6, 2010 – Emissions spewing into the atmosphere now could easily lead to atmospheric CO₂ concentrations of 1,000 parts per million by the year 2200, effectively pushing the world beyond the tipping point for irreversible climate impacts, according to a survey of 14 renowned climate scientists published last week in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

According to Dr. Myles Allen, a climate researcher at the University of Oxford and a participant in the tipping point survey, “We are certainly capable of committing ourselves to an emissions trajectory that make 1,000 ppm in 2200 almost inevitable if we make the wrong decisions over the next 20 years.” Dr. Allen’s comments appeared in the [The Independent](#) last week.

“We are moving towards an inevitable tipping point for climate change if we don’t get our act together now,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development. “This study clearly shows that we need fast, effective mitigation measures to avoid a devastating outcome down the road.”

The future of the international climate negotiations on CO₂ are uncertain, and there is a need to simultaneously target short-term climate forcers such as hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), black carbon soot, methane, and tropospheric ozone, which will lead to near-term climate benefits.

The biggest climate opportunity of the year is being led by Parties to the Montreal Protocol ozone treaty who are advocating for production and consumption of HFCs to be phased down under that treaty. HFCs are ‘super’ greenhouse gases – some with thousands of times the warming potential of CO₂ – currently being used in refrigeration, air conditioning, and foam-blowing for insulation. Many ozone- and climate-safe alternatives to HFCs are now available and many more are expected to enter the market soon, allowing Parties to leapfrog over harmful HFCs.

The proposals submitted earlier this year by Micronesia and the North American countries – US, Canada, and Mexico – would produce tremendous climate benefits – over 100 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent in avoided emissions. Successful agreement among the 196 Parties at the November Montreal Protocol meeting in Kampala would not only be a victory for the ozone

treaty, but would create much-needed momentum leading into the UNFCCC talks in Cancún. “If the Parties can reach agreement in Kampala, Mexico can bring this success and optimism to COP16, making the cooperation between the two treaties on HFCs a shared victory for climate,” said Zaelke. “Virtually eliminating one of the six greenhouse gases in the Kyoto basket would be a huge accomplishment.”

Simple, low-cost technologies can also be high-impact: filters for diesel vehicles and cleaner-burning cookstoves can significantly reduce black carbon, which, in addition to leading to higher temperatures and melting snowpack, is also a contributor to deadly respiratory infections. Improved forest management and production of biochar to sequester carbon are other strategies that can help draw down the CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere.

“This study doesn’t paint a very pretty picture of our future world, but we still have a chance to change it – there are solutions out there that are fast, cost-effective, and provide big returns in climate benefits,” added Zaelke. “We need to set these wheels in motion now if we hope to win the climate change battle.”

###

Expert judgments about transient climate response to alternative future trajectories of radiative forcing, by Kirsten Zickfeld, M. Granger Morgan, David J. Frame, and David W. Keith, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*: <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2010/06/24/0908906107.abstract?sid=6bfc3b67-84b4-4d7f-aa5e-78d361bef31d>

More information on fast-action climate mitigation strategies:

Reducing abrupt climate change risk using the Montreal Protocol and other regulatory actions to complement cuts in CO₂ emissions, by Mario Molina, Durwood Zaelke, K. Madhava Sarma, Stephen O. Andersen, Veerabhadran Ramanathan, and Donald Kaniaru. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2009. <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2009/10/09/0902568106.full.pdf+html>