



Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development

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## **Island Effort to Slow Sea Level Rise Blocked at Bali Montreal Protocol Meeting**

*India, China Delay Proposal to Phase Down HFCs, Ignore UN Warning That These Super Greenhouse Gases Threaten 2°C Guardrail for Safe Climate*

**Replenishment is \$450 Million for three years**

**Bali, Indonesia, November 25, 2011** – At the 23rd annual meeting of the Montreal Protocol ozone treaty in Bali, Indonesia 21-25 November, a strong and vocal majority of 108 Parties supported a plea by island nations to phase down super greenhouse gases known as hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs, used in refrigeration, air conditioning, and insulating foams. The island strategy, lead by the Federated States of Micronesia, is designed to slow the rate of climate change and the accompanying sea level rise that threaten survival of islands, as well as other climate impacts already affecting vulnerable peoples and places.

But a small group of Parties lead by India and China used a procedural maneuver to block the start of formal negotiations, delaying action for another year and allowing HFCs to continue their sky-rocking growth.

At the opening of the Bali meeting, attended by 127 Parties, the UN Environment Programme called for fast action to protect the climate from the explosive growth of HFCs and released a report on the climate damage from HFCs and the best ways for industry to avoid them, including a detailed list of available substitutes. Nobel Laureate Mario Molina of Mexico and Dr. A.R. Ravishankara of the United States led the team preparing the UNEP HFC report.

HFC emissions are growing so fast they threaten to push the climate system past the 2°C outer guardrail for a safe climate in a matter of decades, according to UNEP. Without fast action to limit the growth of HFCs, the Molina/Ravishankara team calculated that HFCs could equal nearly 20% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050, or about the same as current annual emissions from transport, and up to 45% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions if CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are limited to 450 ppm.

(A 450 ppm concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> is expected to cause a 2°C increase in temperature above pre-Industrial levels—the outer guardrail many scientists consider safe. Many other scientists consider 350ppm the maximum safe level for CO<sub>2</sub>.)

“The Montreal Protocol is pushing companies into HFCs even though these chemicals are no longer technically needed in most applications”, said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development, who attended the Bali meeting. “The majority of the Parties

want to correct this mistake with these super greenhouse gases, but without leadership from China and India they can't succeed, and low-lying islands and other vulnerable peoples and places will continue to suffer increasing climate impacts."

"China and India need to show they can be leaders rather than laggards blocking island efforts to survive," Zaelke said. "China and India owe it to the world to support this unique opportunity to protect the climate."

"HFCs present the biggest, fastest piece of climate mitigation available to the world in the next few years," said Zaelke. "The island proposal would ensure climate mitigation equivalent to 100 billion tonnes of CO2 by 2050, many times more than the Kyoto Protocol climate treaty."

But in Bali government officials from India and China supported their chemical industry, rather than the survival of the islands and the protection of other vulnerable peoples and places, including in their own countries. Heavy attendance by industry representatives from India and China appeared to have a noticeable influence on the positions of those Parties. In an intervention on the floor of the plenary, China industry representatives repeated arguments they made in 2007 opposing the previous HCFC accelerated phase-out, even claiming the current HFC proposal would cost the exact same number of jobs as they incorrectly forecast would be lost from the HCFC accelerated phase-out in 2007.

Officials from India and China argued that HFCs can only be addressed under the climate treaty, known as the Kyoto Protocol, although they also have blocked action under the climate treaty.

Parties to the climate treaty meet next week in Durban, South Africa, but prospects for meaningful action are limited. One possible outcome is a new mandate to negotiate a legally binding treaty starting in 2015, to take effect in 2020.

Along with Mexico and Canada, the U.S. also submitted a proposal to phase down HFCs. The North American Parties have provided strong technical support for the HFC proposals, backed up with strong diplomatic efforts. The U.S. and Canada are donors to the Montreal Protocol fund that pays India and China and other developing countries for switching to safer alternatives. The Parties agreed to a three-year replenishment of \$ 450 million for the period 2012-14.

Zaelke noted that while some developing countries may have been disappointed with the replenishment amount, "in a tight budget time like today this is an incredible achievement and shows how strongly all Parties support their treaty."

"Climate change is advancing faster than the policies to address it. We're losing ground every day and we need the Montreal Protocol to get back in the game," said Zaelke. "Very few opportunities exist to target such significant mitigation, so cheaply, and with 100 percent assurance it will get done. That's the beauty of the Montreal Protocol. We know it will work to cut HFCs because it's already worked to phase out nearly 100 similar chemicals."

The UNEP HFC report is here: [http://www.unep.org/dewa/Portals/67/pdf/HFC\\_report.pdf](http://www.unep.org/dewa/Portals/67/pdf/HFC_report.pdf)

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