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European Parliament Calls for Fast Action to Cut Non-CO₂ Climate Forcers Part of Comprehensive Climate Strategy

Washington, DC, September 14, 2011 – The European Parliament is calling for fast action to reduce non-CO₂ climate forcers including black carbon soot, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), methane, and ground-level ozone, which together are responsible for nearly half of climate forcing. The Parliament's call for action came in a [Resolution](#) passed today by an overwhelming majority (578 to 51 with 22 abstentions).

The Resolution calls for a comprehensive climate policy and “stresses that in addition to considering CO₂ emission reductions, it should place emphasis on strategies that can produce the fastest climate response,” specifically strategies to cut black carbon soot, HFCs, methane, and ground-level ozone. Because these climate forcers are short-lived, reducing them produces a fast climate response. This is in contrast to long-lived CO₂, where a significant portion remains in the atmosphere for thousands of years. Even cutting CO₂ emissions to zero today will not produce cooling for a thousand years.

"Cutting just two of the short-lived climate forcers — black carbon soot and ground-level ozone — can cut the rate of global warming in half and by two-thirds in the Arctic for the next 30 to 60 years, assuming we also make progress on CO₂," said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development. Zaelke testified before the Parliament in March 2011 (see written testimony [here](#), and video [here](#)). He added, "Cutting the short-lived forcers is not a substitute for cutting CO₂, which controls long-term climate temperature. But if we don't cut the non-CO₂ forcers now and slow the rate of warming in the next few decades, we risk passing tipping points for abrupt and catastrophic climate impact."

The risk of passing tipping points includes the loss of Arctic sea ice, which currently acts as a defensive shield reflecting heat back into space, the disintegration of the Greenland ice sheet and the world's other glaciers, as well as the die off of the Amazon and other forests. Current climate impacts are already causing significant harm, contributing to extreme weather events. This year has already seen record floods and droughts around the world including in the Horn of Africa where millions are facing starvation.

Emissions of black carbon and other short-lived climate forcers can be reduced quickly using existing technologies and existing laws, according to a recent assessment by the [U.N. Environment Programme and World Meteorological Organization](#).

The EU Resolution follows the first-ever ministerial meeting on short-lived climate forcers held 12 September in Mexico City, hosted by Mexico and Sweden, along with the United States and the United Nations Environment Programme. A follow-up technical meeting will be hosted by Bangladesh in October, with further ministerial meetings likely in the future.

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