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European Parliament urges fast cuts in black carbon and ground-level ozone to reduce threats from dangerous glacial dams in Himalayas

Fast cuts in black carbon are needed to reduce threats from hundreds of dangerous glacial dams in the Himalayan Hindu Kush and the devastating flash floods caused when these dams burst, according to the European Parliament. The Parliament's [Resolution of 27 September 2011](#) recommends fast-action to cut black carbon, as well as ground-level ozone and its precursor methane, to slow glacial melt and reduce the threat of glacial lake outburst floods.

Nirj Deva, Chair of the Committee on Development and author of the [report](#) supporting the *Resolution*, noted during [debate](#) that there are “8,000 glacial lakes in the Hindu Kush Himalayas alone, 203 of which they have declared to be extremely dangerous.” Deva called for an “international agency of the United Nations to be created, through the EU’s support, so that India, Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan and other countries can come together under the auspices of the UN” to reduce such risks.

The *Resolution* “stresses that black carbon remains as prevalent a cause of glacial retreat as carbon dioxide” and “urges immediate action be taken with a view to reducing black carbon and methane emissions, ... as a fast-action method of halting glacial and snow melting.” The *Resolution* calls for a Global Action Plan to reduce short-lived climate forcers, as well as other measures to reduce flood risks from climate change.

The *Resolution* relies on recent evidence from the United Nation Environment Programme and World Meteorological Organization showing that cutting these two local air pollutants could cut the rate of global warming in half during the next 30 to 60 years. The [UNEP/WMO report](#) also calculates that such cuts can save the more than two million lives lost to black carbon every year, and avoid damage to crops. These strategies would complement measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

“The European Parliament is emerging as a global leader in the effort to cut black carbon and other short-lived climate forcers,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development (IGSD). “The Parliament realizes that these fast-action strategies are critical for protecting the world’s vulnerable people and places, including those living downstream from dangerous glacial dams.”

“Because China, India, and other Asian governments are committed to improving public health and promoting sustainable development, the governments and business communities should take advantage of these fast action strategies to reduce short-lived climate forcers,” said Xiaopu Sun, Law Fellow at IGSD.

The Parliament passed another [Resolution on 14 September](#) calling for fast action to reduce black carbon, ground-level ozone, and hydrofluorocarbons, as part of a comprehensive European climate strategy. The September [Major Economies Forum](#) meeting also noted the growing interest in fast action to cut emissions of short-lived climate forcers, and the first-ever [Ministerial meeting](#) on short-lived climate forcers in Mexico City on 12 September also called for global action.

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