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## **Mexico Concludes Cancun Climate Talks with Agreement on Key Points, Lessons of Ozone Treaty Help Overcome Obstacles**

Cancun, Mexico, December 11, 2010 – The UN climate talks in Cancun concluded early Saturday morning with countries reaching consensus on several key points that will now serve as the foundation for negotiations next year in Durban, South Africa on the legally binding architecture for controlling climate change. The chair called a consensus without Bolivia, after that Party refused to join the other 193 Parties.

“A great deal of credit for this morning’s agreement goes to the chair, Mexico’s Patricia Espinosa,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development. “You can’t get consensus on complex climate issues without a seasoned and sophisticated chair. She deserved the standing ovation she received.”

Among the issues agreed were the outline of the mechanisms for financing and transferring technology from the richer to the poorer Parties, as well as for strengthening the capacity of the poorer Parties to implement climate mitigation. Zaelke noted that aspects of these three provisions were borrowed from the Montreal Protocol treaty originally designed to protect the stratospheric ozone layer.

“The spirit of the successful Montreal Protocol – its commitment to a structure that is considered fair and balanced by both developed and developing countries – helped bring the climate parties together,” said Zaelke, who teaches international environmental law at the University of California, Santa Barbara and American University in Washington, DC.

“We don’t need to reinvent the wheel,” added Zaelke, “when we can borrow from the Montreal Protocol”, which has been successful precisely because it was able to bridge the differences between the two sides. “The Montreal Protocol is the world’s most successful environmental treaty,” said Zaelke, having phased out 96 chemicals that damage the ozone layer. “Because many of these same chemicals also warm the climate, the Montreal Protocol is also the world’s best climate treaty, so far, and phasing out these doubly damaging chemicals has delayed climate warming by decades.”

Forest protection advocates were also pleased with the final outcome of the Cancun negotiations as Parties were able to reach an agreement on REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries). With tropical forests storing more than half of the world’s carbon found in land-based vegetation, the agreement is an important step toward protecting the climate by providing compensation to

developing countries for preserving their forests through sustainable management practices.

The Cancun agreement also anchored the Copenhagen Accord more firmly in the formal UN process. Under the Accord, parties have pledged various levels of mitigation. UNEP calculates that the high end of the pledges provides 60% of the mitigation needed by 2020 to stay below 2°C.

### *Fast action mitigation to protect the world's most vulnerable countries*

With the climate negotiations extended for at least another year and perhaps two, and with limited ambition for mitigation, the UNFCCC will not be able to limit temperatures to 1.5 or 2°C to avoid the more devastating impacts of climate change. To remedy this, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is promoting additional fast-action mitigation strategies to close the gap and save vulnerable nations from the coming catastrophic impacts most climate scientists say are almost certain in a time frame of decades.

The island's strategy focuses on the 50% of climate warmers other than carbon dioxide. These non-CO<sub>2</sub> warming pollutants are short-lived in the atmosphere, and cutting their emissions delivers fast results. The pollutants include hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), a group of "super" greenhouse gases with hundreds to thousands the warming potential of CO<sub>2</sub>. Ninety-one countries support using the Montreal Protocol to cut the use of HFCs.

### *'Buy back lost time' by cutting non-CO<sub>2</sub> climate warmers outside the UN treaty*

In addition to HFCs, FSM is calling for action on black carbon, methane, and tropospheric ozone, other non-CO<sub>2</sub> warming agents whose emissions can be reduced now. Nobel Laureate Mario Molina from Mexico was in Cancun to champion the non-CO<sub>2</sub> agenda.

Dr. Molina and FSM emphasize that CO<sub>2</sub> is the single biggest climate pollutant at 50%, and that it is essential to cut it as quickly as technology and politics allow. But even if CO<sub>2</sub> is cut to zero emissions, it will not produce cooling for at least 1,000 years.

This makes the other 50% of climate pollutants, the non-CO<sub>2</sub> pollutants, critical to control, according to Dr. Molina, who spoke at an official side event organized jointly by FSM and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Quick wins against non-CO<sub>2</sub> pollutants can buy back time that's been lost struggling to cut carbon dioxide, said UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner. UNEP will be releasing an assessment of non-CO<sub>2</sub> mitigation strategies early next year in an important step towards a comprehensive plan to reduce soot emissions, along with tropospheric ozone and methane.

Sweden and the Philippines also joined the non-CO<sub>2</sub> event in Cancun, and described current commitments they were making. These include measures to address black carbon pollution that is reaching the Arctic, where it accelerates the melting of snow and ice by darkening them and allowing them to absorb more sunlight. India, a country where the majority of soot emissions come from biomass-burning cookstoves, announced that it would launch a black carbon initiative next week. Indoor air pollution from black carbon is a mass killer, responsible for the deaths of

1.9 million of women and children every year.

FSM had submitted a proposed decision on non-CO<sub>2</sub> near-term mitigation. While not taken up by the Parties in Cancun, the FSM proposal as well as UNEP's recent focus on non-CO<sub>2</sub> climate pollution, nevertheless is catalyzing action at the national, regional, and international level. Cuts to these non-CO<sub>2</sub> pollutants do not need to wait for the conclusion of the UN climate negotiations.

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