



****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

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

‘Super’ Greenhouse Gases Targeted by India and US Task Force

Washington, DC, February 21, 2011 – On Friday, significant progress was made toward addressing emissions of ‘super’ greenhouse gases when India and the US agreed to establish an Indo-US Technical Task Force on hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs. India’s Minister of Environment, Jairam Ramesh, hosted US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment, Daniel A. Reifsnyder, in New Delhi, along with members of industry and civil society groups to discuss the HFC issue.

HFCs are potential substitutes for ozone-depleting and climate-warming CFCs and HCFCs currently being phased out under the Montreal Protocol treaty to protect the ozone layer. Although they don’t harm the ozone layer, HFCs are powerful climate warming gases and their emissions are expected to rise sharply over the next few decades without aggressive action, significantly contributing to climate change.

The task force will include industry representatives, scientists, and government officials from India and the US to evaluate a phase-down of the production and use of HFCs under the Montreal Protocol.

“Reducing HFC emissions under the Montreal Protocol is the biggest, fastest piece of climate mitigation available to the world in the next few years and Minister Ramesh is one of the best-positioned people to lead the world on this important opportunity,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development. Minister Ramesh was a key climate leader in the Cancun talks last December, helping broker an outcome that moved the multilateral process forward to the next meeting of the UN climate talks in Durban, South Africa later this year.

Minister Ramesh stated during the workshop that the ozone treaty was “the world’s most successful international environmental agreement” and that India has always complied with its phase-out obligations, often ahead of schedule. He noted, for example, that India’s phase-out of CFCs was completed 17 months ahead of the treaty’s 2010 deadline.

Last year, the Federated States of Micronesia along with other vulnerable island countries proposed an amendment to the ozone treaty to phase down the production and use of HFCs. Once agreed, the amendment would ensure climate mitigation of up to 100 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent by 2050, many times more than the Kyoto Protocol climate treaty. The United

States, Mexico, and Canada also proposed a similar amendment.

Although India – with concerns about alternatives and available financing – did not voice support for the 2010 Micronesia or North American proposals, Minister Ramesh acknowledged on Friday that, “With international financing and technology support, there is no reason why India should not lead in the phase-down of HFCs.”

“With 91 Parties to the Montreal Protocol already backing climate-friendly alternatives to HFCs, India’s positive approach to the issue is a significant step forward. Their leadership would ensure success,” said Zaelke. The new task force is expected to submit a report by August 1st of this year, in advance of the Montreal Protocol’s mid-year, Open-Ended Working Group meeting August 1-5 in Bangkok.

###

India Ministry of Environment and Forests Press Brief: <http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Press%20Brief-on-Indo-US-HFC-Workshop.pdf>

For further information on Montreal Protocol and HFCs, see Mario Molina, Durwood Zaelke, K. Madhava Sarma, Stephen O. Andersen, Veerabhadran Ramanathan, and Donald Kaniaru, [*Reducing abrupt climate change risk using the Montreal Protocol and other regulatory actions to complement cuts in CO₂ emissions*](#), Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2009).