



Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development

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## **North American Leaders Support Using Ozone Treaty to Cut 'Potent Greenhouse Gases'**

Guadalajara, Mexico, August 11, 2009 – Yesterday the leaders of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico committed to “work together under the Montreal Protocol to phase down the use of HFCs and bring about significant reductions of this potent greenhouse gas.” The agreement is included in the *Leaders Declaration on Climate Change and Energy* from the North American Summit in Guadalajara, Mexico.

“Phasing down HFCs under the Montreal Protocol is a brilliant strategy,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development. “This is the treaty that never fails to deliver. It’s already phased out 96 chemicals by 97%, and it’s ready to tackle these super greenhouse gases.”

The campaign to tackle HFCs began earlier this year with a proposal by two small island nations, the Federated States of Micronesia and Mauritius. “The support of North America leaders is appreciated,” said Ambassador Yosiwo George from the Federated States of Micronesia. “It brings strong reinforcements and gives our islands a fighting chance to phase down HFCs under the Montreal Protocol.”

However, success of the proposal will be largely in the hands of the U.S. “These island nations need the muscle of the U.S. to get an agreement,” added Zaelke. “This is a great opportunity for the Administration to show its leadership on climate change.”

The North American leaders’ commitment to the Montreal Protocol follows the commitment made by G8 leaders in July to “*work with our partners to ensure that HFC emissions reductions are achieved under the appropriate framework....*”

Since April, the HFC phase-down proposal has gained eight additional co-sponsors from fellow island nations, all of which are promoting this fast-action measure as a way to stave off abrupt climate change and rising sea levels that threaten their homes and cultures. The final negotiations on the islands’ proposal will take place this November at the Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol in Port Ghalib, Egypt.

A recent study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* shows that HFCs (used widely in refrigeration and air conditioning applications) could grow to almost 45 percent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050 under a 2°C scenario where CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are stabilized at

450 ppm. Although downstream emissions of HFCs are currently included under the Kyoto Protocol, quicker and more cost-effective reductions could be achieved by using the Montreal Protocol to control upstream production and consumption of HFCs. Because HFCs are short-lived (about a decade in the atmosphere in contrast to centuries for CO<sub>2</sub>), cutting these emissions now would result in huge climate benefits in the near term.

With the tipping points for abrupt climate change on the horizon, there is an even greater need for 'fast-action' measures that can be implemented now, with current technology. Other near-term actions include reducing emissions of black carbon soot, methane, and tropospheric ozone, and expanding bio-sequestration through production of biochar.

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