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Split Decision this Week for Short-Lived Climate Pollutants

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition Continues to Expand while a Small Coalition of States Again Stalls Progress to Reduce HFCs under the Montreal Protocol in the Face of Stronger and more Vocal Support

Washington DC, 26 July 2012 – This has been a rough week in the fight against climate, leaving many advocates feeling justifiably bruised. The New York Times has reported that record breaking droughts across North America are affecting 88% of the U.S. corn crop and will likely drive up prices on staple groceries next year. NASA added to the onslaught, announcing that 97% percent of Greenland’s ice sheet surface had thawed in the month of July, more than at any time in more than 30 years of satellite observations. However, climate advocates gave as good as they got, as momentum to address short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) continues to build through the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC).

Seven new country partners including Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan and the United Kingdom joined the CCAC at a Coalition working group meeting in Paris from 24-25 July. This brings the total number of partners up to 21. The CCAC has grown quickly in the six months since it first announced by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with an original six members from developing and developed countries.

“Fast success cutting short-lived climate pollutants will slow the accelerating rate of global and regional warming, save millions of lives each year, and increase food security,” announced Durwood Zaelke, President of IGSD, one of the first NGOs to join the Coalition. “Pursuing the CCAC’s goals will build the sense of urgent optimism and confidence that we need to continuously strengthen ambition to tackle CO₂ more aggressively, which is essential to limiting the Planet’s long-term temperature increase to an acceptable level.”

Taking fast action to reduce SLCPs including black carbon, methane, tropospheric ozone and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), is a critical climate strategy which can cut the rate of global warming in half for the next several decades, cut the rate of warming over the elevated regions of the Himalayas and Tibet by at least half, and the rate of warming in the Arctic by two-thirds over the next 30 years. Since many SLCPs are also potent air pollutants cutting them can also prevent up to 4.7 million premature deaths each year and prevent billions of dollars in crop losses.

The CCAC Secretariat is housed by UNEP in its Paris offices and is supported by initial funding from the US, Canada, Sweden and Norway. The World Bank has announced that they have \$12 billion in their portfolio that can contribute to the Coalition goals and the G8 leaders in May commissioned the Bank to prepare a report on ways to integrate reductions of SLCPs into their activities and to assess funding options for methane reduction. In September the CCAC approved five initial fast-action initiatives to accelerate action to reduce SLCPs.

At the Working Group Meeting the CCAC announced significant progress on the five initiatives including:

- a new partnership with the Global Methane Initiative, the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, and the Clinton Climate Initiative to reduce methane and black carbon emissions from urban waste,
- work with UNEP’s existing sulphur reduction efforts to address black carbon emissions from diesel

generators,

- cooperation with the Global Methane Initiative, the Natural Gas STAR International Program, and the Global Gas Flaring Reduction (GGFR) Partnership to combat emissions from the oil and gas industry, and
- Mexico announced a Coalition workshop in September to advance action in the region on SLCPs, including how to assist countries to switch to more efficient and mechanized ‘firing’ technologies for brick kilns

Meanwhile, at the 32nd Montreal Protocol Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) meeting, progress to phase-down HFCs under the treaty was stalled by a small coalition of countries led by China, India, and Brazil. The OEWG meeting, which began on the 24th will close on the 27th, was preceded by an industry showcase, organized by the CCAC, to highlight climate-friendly alternatives to super-greenhouse gas HFCs. The conference was attended by more than 400 representatives from industry, government and civil society and showed that a broad range of alternatives are already available to replace HFCs.

For the past three years proposals to amend the Montreal Protocol to phase-down HFCs have been presented by Federated States of Micronesia as well as the United States, Canada and Mexico have submitted similar proposed amendments. The proposals would reduce 85% of HFC production and use, and produce climate mitigation equivalent to 100 billion tonnes of CO₂ by 2050.

Due to their increasing use as substitutes for HCFC refrigerants currently being phased-down under the Montreal Protocol, HFCs are the fastest growing greenhouse gases in many countries including the US. Without fast action to limit this accelerating growth, the climate warming caused by HFCs could equal nearly 20% of the warming caused by CO₂ by 2050, or about the same as current annual emissions from transport, and up to 40% of carbon dioxide warming if CO₂ emissions are limited in line with present international goals.

Over the past few years support has been building behind the HFC amendments. Since 2011, 107 Parties to the Treaty have signed the *Bangkok Declaration* calling for HFCs to be replaced with chemicals that have a low impact on global warming. In Brazil last month more than a hundred heads of State signed the Rio+20 Declaration [The Future We Want](#) which called for:

222. We recognize that the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances is resulting in a rapid increase in the use and release of high global-warming potential hydrofluorocarbons to the environment. We support a gradual phase-down in the consumption and production of hydrofluorocarbons.

Many parties had hoped to take the first step this week in Bangkok by creating a formal Contact Group to negotiate the terms and schedule for a phase-down of high-GWP HFCs. Despite the opposition advocates for the amendment have become stronger and more vocal, while its opponents presented arguments which are increasingly seen as efforts to allow a few out of touch companies survive a few years longer at the world’s expense.

“These three countries hold the key to the amendment and the safety of the most vulnerable peoples and places for the next 30 to 60 years,” said Zaelke. “The question is whether China is ready to be a global leader and help the world’s most vulnerable countries.”

UNEP’s press releas for CCAC meeting is [here](#)

The Micronesia HFC Proposal is [here](#)

The North American HFC Proposal is [here](#)