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Major Environmental Treaty Tackles Black Carbon as Climate Pollutant

Washington D.C., 10 May 2012. – Black carbon, the second most potent climate pollutant, has been targeted by the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), making it the first international treaty to act on the critical link between climate change and air pollution. Once it enters into force, the black carbon amendment requires the development of national inventories and requests each party to “give priority ... to emission reduction measures which also significantly reduce black carbon in order to provide benefits for health, environment and to help mitigation of near-term climate change.”

“Cutting black carbon is a triple win, slowing climate change, cleaning the air, and saving lives,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development. “Regulating black carbon through CLRTAP can be a model for other regional treaties to control air pollution and climate change.”

The Executive Body of CLRTAP approved the amendment May 4th to address black carbon through the Convention’s 1999 Gothenburg Protocol, which currently sets emission ceilings for four major air pollutants, sulphur, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and ammonia. “This is a significant step towards requiring black carbon reductions in Europe and North America,” stated Zaelke. The amendment will enter into force when two-thirds of the parties to the protocol ratify it, or 17 of the 26 countries.

The US EPA recently ranked black carbon the number two climate pollutant behind carbon dioxide. Cutting black carbon in addition to other short-lived climate pollutants such as methane, ground-level ozone, and hydrofluorocarbons can reduce the current rate of global warming by almost half and the rate of warming in the Arctic by two-thirds for the next 30 or more years while avoiding up to 4.7 million premature deaths each year from outdoor air pollution and up to 1.6 million a year from indoor pollution.

The amendment follows the formation of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants, which now has 13 members, including Sweden, Mexico, US, Canada, Ghana, Bangladesh, Norway, Colombia, Japan, Norway, UNEP, the European Commission, and the World Bank. More information can be found at the Coalition [website](#).

Zaelke said, “To win the climate war, we need to cut both the short-lived climate pollutants and long-lived carbon dioxide, a substantial portion of which remains in the air for millennia. Fortunately, we’re gaining allies quickly in the second front in the fight against short-lived climate pollutants, where a victory will build the confidence we need to win the war.” The short-lived climate pollutants are responsible for 40 to 45% of all warming, with carbon dioxide responsible for the other 55-60%.

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