Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
Global Environment Facility

Press Release

Reducing Black Carbon Can Save Lives and Help Combat Climate Change

Washington, D.C., 19 October 2015 – A new report produced by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) highlights the importance of reducing emissions of black carbon and other short-lived climate pollutants while simultaneously continuing efforts to mitigate carbon dioxide emissions.

In the publication, "Black Carbon Mitigation and the Role of the Global Environment Facility," STAP recommends significant investments in accelerating the reduction of black carbon to directly support implementation of the recently announced Sustainable Development Goals in the areas of improved air quality, climate change mitigation, reduced climate vulnerability, and transfer of low-carbon technologies.

Black carbon causes millions of deaths every year and contributes to the warming of the planet. In the atmosphere it appears as air pollution, with emissions arising mainly from the combustion of diesel fuel and biofuels, coal-fired power stations, biomass cook stoves, brick kilns and vegetation burning in open fields.

"The GEF is already addressing black carbon as part of its climate mitigation program. What we are proposing is to expand these nascent efforts across other areas of the GEF program, and to significantly expand the mitigation, ecosystem, and human health benefits that result from these activities," said Rosina Bierbaum, STAP Chair.

Black carbon absorbs solar energy at rates of up to a million times more than carbon dioxide. Although only lasting in the atmosphere for a few days, it adds to the overall global warming process. It has been linked to a range of climate impacts and accelerated ice and snow melt and sensitive regions such as the Arctic and the Himalayas are particularly vulnerable to the warming and melting effects of black carbon.

Black carbon emissions also have adverse impacts on human health and ecosystems. According to the World Health Organization, indoor smoke from burning coal or wood is among the top ten major health risk factors globally, contributing to over 4 million premature deaths from illness from household air pollution each year. Women and children are particularly at risk.

Recommendations from the report for the GEF include: mainstreaming black carbon mitigation measures into their project portfolio; supporting programs and projects that focus on the reduction of black carbon emissions; measuring and reporting on the amount of black emissions avoided or reduced as a result of GEF-funded projects; and increasing awareness and the engagement of stakeholders involved in national, regional and international efforts to address black carbon mitigation.

The report will be presented to the 49th GEF Council Meeting that will take place in Washington D.C, from 20 to 22 October 2015.

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About the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the GEF (STAP) is an independent group of scientists supported by the United Nations Environment Programme, responsible for connecting the GEF to the most up-to-date and authoritative and globally representative science.

The report can be downloaded here: www.stapgef.org/publications/

About the Global Environment Facility

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a global partnership of 183 countries, 18 multilateral and civil society organizations, and the private sector tackling a wide spectrum of environmental challenges – including clean energy, protection of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, climate mitigation and adaptation, and cross-cutting problems such as sustainable urban development.

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