



**CLIMATE &
CLEAN AIR
COALITION**
TO REDUCE SHORT-LIVED
CLIMATE POLLUTANTS

PRESS RELEASE

UN Environment Head Welcomes Signal to Combat Climate Change by Worlds Two Key Economies

China and US Announcement to Phase-Down HFCs Can Form Part of Wider Action in Run-Up to 2015

25 March 2014 – The World Health Organization (WHO) announced today that air pollution is now the world's largest single environmental health risk, resulting in 7 million premature deaths in 2012.

Nairobi, 9 June 2013-A decision by China and the United States to cooperate on phasing down a group of synthetic chemicals in order to combat climate change was today welcomed by Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

Mr Steiner said the announcement, made by President Barack Obama and Chinese President Jinping Xi at their retreat in California this weekend could signal a new and perhaps transformational chapter in international cooperation on climate change.

The American and Chinese heads of state announced they would be targeting Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) - a group of replacement chemicals for products such as refrigerators and foams for which there are already a range of climate and ozone-friendly alternatives.

HFCs are beginning to replace another group of chemicals known as HCFCs that damage the ozone layer-the thin gassy layer around the Earth that filters out deadly levels of ultra violet light from the sun.

While HFCs are ozone-layer friendly they are however powerful greenhouse gases: if taken up by industry over the next few years and decades they are likely, by 2050 to amount to emissions equivalent to 3.5 to 8.8 Gigatonnes (Gt) of carbon dioxide.

That is comparable to total current annual emissions from transport, estimated at around 6-7 Gt annually according to a UNEP-coordinated study from 2011.

The two heads of state said they would work through the Montreal Protocol, the UNEP-hosted treaty established to protect the ozone layer, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to achieve international action in respect to phasing down the consumption and production of HFCs.

Mr Steiner said: "Along with a variety of recent signals from several key countries including China and the United States, this one on HFCs by these two key economies is welcome as the world moves towards a universal UN treaty on climate change by 2015 -certainly allowing the market for HFCs to grow will only aggravate the challenge of combating climate change".

UNEP in partnership with over 60 countries and organizations is also working to phase-down some HFCs and other so called short-lived climate pollutants such as black carbon or 'soot' and methane under a one year old initiative called the Climate and Clean Air Coalition.

This voluntary coalition is promoting reduction of short lived climate pollutants to tackle air pollution, bring widespread benefits for health and agriculture as well as to lead to near term climate benefits.

While short lived climate pollutants are responsible for a substantial fraction of near-term climate change, actions on short term climate pollutants need to be complemented by deep and rapid cuts in CO₂ emissions if global mean temperature increase over the 21st Century is to be held below 2°C

"It is widely recognized that securing a meaningful treaty and keeping an average global temperature rise under 2 degrees C this century will require all hands on deck - what however must not be overlooked or sidelined is the urgency to also tackle the principle greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, as part of negotiations underway under the UN climate convention," he said.

"The signal from China and the United States in respect to HFCs is important as both a confidence builder and if it paves the way to a universal agreement involving all nations that reflects the science of where all emissions are today and where they need to be by a series of deadlines beginning with 2020," said Mr Steiner.

The statement from the White House

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 8, 2013

United States and China Agree to Work Together on Phase Down of HFCs

Today, President Obama and President Xi agreed on an important new step to confront global climate change. For the first time, the United States and China will work together and with other countries to use the expertise and institutions of the Montreal Protocol to phase down the consumption and production of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), among other forms of multilateral cooperation.

A global phase down of HFCs could potentially reduce some 90 gigatons of CO₂ equivalent by 2050, equal to roughly two years worth of current global greenhouse gas emissions.

The agreement between the United States and China reads as follows:

Regarding HFCs, the United States and China agreed to work together and with other countries through multilateral approaches that include using the expertise and institutions of the Montreal Protocol to phase down the production and consumption of HFCs, while continuing to include HFCs within the scope of UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol provisions for accounting and reporting of emissions.

HFCs are potent greenhouse gases used in refrigerators, air conditioners, and industrial applications. While they do not deplete the ozone layer, many are highly potent greenhouse gases. Their use is growing rapidly as replacements for ozone-depleting substances that are being phased out under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Left unabated, HFC emissions growth could grow to nearly 20 percent of carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, a serious climate mitigation concern.

The Montreal Protocol was established in 1987 to facilitate a global approach to combat depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer. Every country in the world is a party to the Protocol, and it has successfully phased out or is in the process of phasing out several key classes of chemicals, including chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), and halons.

The transitions out of CFCs and HCFCs provide major ozone layer protection benefits, but the unintended consequence is the rapid current and projected future growth of climate-damaging HFCs.

For the past four years, the United States, Canada, and Mexico have proposed an amendment to the Montreal Protocol to phase down the production and consumption of HFCs.

The amendment would gradually reduce consumption and production and control byproduct emissions of HFCs in all countries, and require reporting in these areas. The amendment includes a financial assistance component for countries that can already access the Protocol's Multilateral Fund, and leaves unchanged the reporting and accounting provisions of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Kyoto Protocol on HFC emissions.

White House press release ends

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition <http://www.unep.org/ccac/>

HFCs: A Critical Link in Protecting Climate and the Ozone Layer-a UNEP Synthesis Report is available at http://www.unep.org/dewa/Portals/67/pdf/HFC_report.pdf

Key Findings from the report:

The contribution of HFCs to climate forcing is currently less than one per cent of all greenhouse gases.

But levels of HFCs are rising as they replace HCFCs-HFC 134a, the most popular type, has increased in the atmosphere by about 10 per cent per year since 2006.

The consumption of HFCs is projected to exceed the peak consumption levels in the 1980s of the old, now fully phased-out CFCs-this is primarily due to rising demand in emerging economies and a global population now above seven billion.

The phase-out and phase-down of CFCs and HCFCs since the late 1980s has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by around 8 Gt CO₂eq annually while reducing damage to the ozone layer. This has been a tremendous plus for global climate protection.

However, without action, the increasing use of HFCs could add annual greenhouse gas emissions of between 3.5 and 8.8 Gt CO₂ eq by 2050, and thus undo the large climate benefits scored by the phase out of CFCs and HCFCs since the late 1980s.

The report points to a range of alternatives that could ensure that the impact of HFCs remains small and equal to today's impacts.

Alternative Methods and Processes - these range from improved building design that reduces or avoids the need for air conditioners to fibre rather than foam insulation materials

Non-HFC substances - there are already commercially available alternatives that range from ammonia to dimethyl ether for use in foams, refrigeration and fire protection systems

Climate-friendly HFCs - some HFCs have shorter life-times in the atmosphere of months rather than years. Some of these are being introduced such as HFC 1234ze in foams and HFC-1234yf for mobile air-conditioners

The report points out that, with further technical developments backed by standards, investment incentives and training for technicians and workers, the introduction of alternatives to climate-damaging HFCs could be accelerated and fast-tracked.

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition is a voluntary global partnership of governments, intergovernmental organizations, businesses, scientific institutions and civil society committed to catalyzing concrete, substantial action to reduce Short Lived Climate Pollutants (including methane, black carbon and many hydrofluorocarbons). The Coalition has [11 initiatives](#) working to raise awareness, mobilize resources and lead transformative actions in key emitting and cross cutting sectors. SLCP reduction must go hand in hand with deep and persistent cuts to carbon dioxide and other long-lived greenhouse gases if we are to stay under a 2 degrees Celsius warming limit.

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