Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development

EPA Honors Champions for Protecting Climate, Ozone

Montreal Accord's Accelerated HCFC Phase-Out Enters into Force

Cuts Emissions Additional 16 Billion Tonnes CO_2-equivalent

Zaelke, Stone Dual Award Winners

Washington, D.C., 19 May 2008 – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency honored Durwood Zaelke, president and founder of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development (IGSD), and former IGSD research fellow Scott Stone, along with several other individuals for protecting ozone and climate by successfully promoting an adjustment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Protect the Ozone Layer. The awards were presented just days after entry into force of the adjustment, which accelerates the phase-out of HCFCs, chemicals that do double damage by destroying stratospheric ozone and warming the climate.

Durwood Zaelke, IGSD President
Photo courtesy of Earth Negotiations Bulletin

The adjustment will reduce climate emissions by 16 billion metric tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent through 2040, according to EPA. EPA calculates that this equals the emissions from 70 million U.S. households for 30 years. The HCFC chemicals targeted in the accelerated phase-out can be 2,000 times more potent in contributing to climate change than CO_2. The adjustment will avoid 1,000 deaths from skin cancer in the U.S. alone.

Scott Stone, former IGSD research fellow

The adjustment was accepted by all 191 Parties to the Montreal Protocol at the September 2007 meeting, which celebrated the 20th anniversary of what is widely considered the most successful environmental treaty. The adjustment explicitly adds climate protection to the Montreal Protocol's traditional goal of ozone protection.

"Thanks to the hard work of this talented team of government officials and non-governmental groups being honored by the US EPA's climate and ozone awards, Montreal Protocol Parties were able to reach agreement to speed up the phase out of HCFCs," said James L. Connaughton, Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. "This historic agreement not only helps the recovery of the ozone layer, it also represents one of the single largest steps both the developed and developing countries have taken together to undertake binding international commitments to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

The EPA awards highlighted the hard work and dedication required to achieve consensus among the 191 Parties to accelerate the phase-out of HCFCs. Argentina's Minister of Environment, Romina

Picolotti, was an earlier leader of the effort, seizing the opportunity to take quick action to protect the climate. She and her deputy Ana Maria Kleymeyer reached out to Brazil to bring them on-board. They both worked diligently with other Parties in the months leading up to the September meeting, with Kleymeyer taking on a lead role during the final negotiations in September in Montreal. Minister Picolotti received a climate award, Kleymeyer an ozone award.

"Argentina is very proud to have been a driving force in persuading Parties to the Montreal Protocol to protect the climate with an accelerated phase-out of greenhouse gases," said Ms. Picolotti. "This was a diplomatic coup—planned and executed by an incredibly dedicated team of government, industry, and public interest professionals. We are re-energized by winning these wonderful awards, and we are committed to doing still more in the future."

Romina Picolotti, Argentina's Minister of Environment

Zaelke and Stone were the only awardees to receive both an award for climate protection and an award for ozone protection. They worked with an international team of experts to raise awareness among the Parties about the climate benefits of the adjustment and acted as informal advisors, utilizing several influential articles they co-authored, including *Strengthening the Montreal Protocol: Insurance Against Abrupt Climate Change* and *Frequently Asked Questions: Strengthening the Montreal Protocol by Accelerating the Phaseout of HCFCs at the 20th Anniversary Meeting of the Parties* (both with Donald Kaniaru and Raj Shende). Their policy papers relied upon the scientific calculations in a critical research paper by Guus J. M. Velders, Stephen O. Andersen, John S. Daniel, David W. Fahey, and Mack McFarland, who also received a climate protection award from EPA.

Ana Maria Kleymeyer, chief international environmental advisor, Argentina
Photo courtesy of Earth Negotiations Bulletin

"2007 will be remembered as the year environmental NGOs joined with developing and developed countries to bring climate concerns to the Montreal Protocol—starting with an accelerated HCFC phase-out," said Zaelke, who is also the Director of the Secretariat for the International Network for Environmental Compliance & Enforcement, and a co-director of the Program on Governance for Sustainable Development at the Donald Bren School of Environmental Science & Management, University of California, Santa Barbara. "Our message is that protecting stratospheric ozone is not finished and that the Montreal Protocol has many important lessons for other climate treaties."

Other environmental leaders receiving 2008 EPA awards included Marco Gonzalez, Executive Secretary of the UNEP Ozone Secretariat, Maas Goote from the Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, Husamuddin Ahmadzai from the Swedish EPA, and Sateeaved Seebaluck from the Mauritius Ministry of Environment, all of whom played key roles in the adjustment.

The "adjustment" feature of the Montreal Protocol is a unique process that allows Parties to quickly strengthen control measures for chemicals already addressed by the treaty. An adjustment requires a consensus of the Parties and enters into force six months after notification of the adjustment has been sent to the United Nations in New York. The accelerated HCFC phase-out adjustment is the first time all countries of the world, including China, India, and the U.S., explicitly accepted mandatory and enforceable climate protection targets.

Zaelke and his team at IGSD are continuing to focus on maximizing the climate mitigation potential of the ozone treaty through the destruction of CFCs and HCFCs contained in old air conditioners and other equipment, as well as foams and solvents. By 2012, more than 7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent will be released into the atmosphere at the end of the products' lives if not recovered.

Reducing emissions from banks can help keep the climate system from passing tipping points for abrupt climate changes, including catastrophic sea-level rise. This prompted the Federated States of Micronesia and Mauritius to submit a joint proposal last week to address the issue of these equipment emissions at the next Montreal Protocol meeting in November. Ambassador Masao Nakayama, Permanent Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia to the United Nations, testified before the U.S. House of Representatives in February of this year on the need to address climate emissions immediately, including emissions from banks of old CFCs and HCFCs and black carbon, or soot.

Minister Picolotti and her deputy Ana Maria Kleymeyer also recognized the importance of utilizing the Montreal Protocol to reap near-term climate benefits and submitted a proposal from Argentina. The U.S., a strong supporter of the adjustment last September, pledged its support for the destruction of banks during the UNFCCC meeting in Bali and has indicated that it will be submitting a proposed decision (rather than an adjustment) to address the issue.

With the tipping point for devastating sea-level rise and other abrupt climate change events only 10 years away according to some scientists, fast-action climate strategies like the 2007 Montreal Protocol adjustment are critical to buying world leaders more time to negotiate a long-term post-2012 climate treaty.

Zaelke and his team at IGSD are continuing to focus on other fast-action climate mitigation strategies which include strengthening laws that regulate black carbon (soot) emissions—a pollutant now recognized by scientists as the second largest contributor to climate change after carbon dioxide emissions. Black carbon speeds snow and ice-melt by changing their ability to reflect light, contributing significantly to the disintegration of Arctic sea-ice. Providing technology to the developing world to reduce black carbon emissions would save millions of lives a year.

In addition to cutting black carbon emissions, reducing other non-CO_2 gases such as HFCs and methane, and protecting and expanding forests are actions that produce near-term climate benefits.

Another fast-action climate protection strategy is bio-char sequestration (turning biomass into a charcoal-like substance which can store massive amounts of carbon for hundreds of years and enrich the soil for agriculture). Switching from slash-and-burn to slash-and-char can reduce 12% of annual carbon emissions caused by land use changes, which is 2% of the world's total annual emissions. When bio-char is combined with biofuel production, it can become a carbon negative process that draws down atmospheric concentrations of CO_2 and increases sinks.

Current technology to increase energy efficiency in various sectors as well as wind power and other forms of renewable energy, are additional methods that are available now and should be taken advantage of and expanded immediately to aid in protecting the world against the tipping point for abrupt climate change.

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