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Obama and Xi Reach Historic Agreement on Climate Change

World's top two climate polluters agree on fast action to cut short and long-lived emissions

12 November 2014 - "President Obama's historic agreement today with President Xi in China is the kind of bold action needed to reinvigorate the world's efforts to slow and eventually reverse climate pollution before the most severe climate impacts become irreversible", said Durwood Zaelke, president of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development, a global think tank. "President Obama might just save the world with his leadership on climate protection."

The US-China agreement has the three key elements for climate safety: fast action to cut hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs, a short-lived climate pollutant, fast action to cut carbon dioxide emissions, the main long-lived climate pollutant, and the beginning of action to manage carbon dioxide after it has been emitted, through an ambitious plan to develop carbon capture, utilization, and storage, for example by capturing carbon dioxide at the smoke stack and turning it into cement-like building material.

President Obama understands the need to build political momentum at the global level to bring out the A game of the other large emitters, and this agreement between the number one and number two leading climate polluters will do that. The president's leadership started at home, which gave him the renewed credibility he needed to return to the global stage.

For the past two years President Obama has been leading the global effort to control hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs, under the Montreal Protocol, the world's most successful climate treaty. The US-China cooperation has been the cornerstone of the President Obama's efforts, starting with the first meeting between the two leaders in Sunnyland, California in June of last year, which resulted in two agreements: one to cooperate on North Korea, the other to work together to reduce HFCs.

The leadership on the HFC amendment by President Obama and President Xi sets the stage to conclude the biggest, fastest piece of climate mitigation available to the world in the near-term in advance of the UN climate negotiations in Paris next December, which aims to conclude a broad-based global climate treaty. Controlling HFCs and improving the energy efficiency of the air conditioners and other appliances that use them can provide ten to twenty percent of the climate mitigation the world need to keep the climate within safe bounds.

"President Obama understands that the road to Paris now goes through Montreal", Zaelke said. The annual meeting of the parties to the Montreal Protocol is next week in Paris.

IGSD's *Primer on Short-Lived Climate Pollutants* is [here](#); its *Primer on Hydrofluorocarbons* is [here](#)