



Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development

****For Immediate Release****

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U.S. EPA Honors Banks for Climate Diplomacy Work

Washington, D.C. - George David Banks, a senior law fellow at the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development (IGSD), has been awarded a U.S. EPA Climate Protection Award for his work in promoting climate diplomacy during his tenure at the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). On April 21, 2009, six individuals were recognized for their work in promoting climate protection at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Banks, the only Bush political appointee to have ever received such an award, was cited for his work in strengthening the Montreal Protocol ozone treaty to protect the climate, including the pivotal role he played in advancing the historic agreement to accelerate the phase-out of HCFC greenhouse gases in 2007 and, in 2008, promoting the recovery and destruction of unwanted ozone-depleting chemicals, or “banks”, that would both harm the ozone layer and contribute to climate change. With U.S. support, last November the developed country Parties agreed to contribute US \$490 million to finance projects over the next three years, including helping developing countries meet their commitments for the HCFC phase-out as well as financing banks pilot projects which will put the world on the path to avoiding up to 6 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent (eq.) by 2015, and up to 14 billion tonnes of CO₂-eq. thereafter.

“Dave’s work over the past two years to build U.S. support for turning the ozone treaty into an explicit climate treaty was invaluable,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of IGSD. “With a successful 21-year track record of phasing out chemicals, strengthening the Montreal Protocol to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions is one of the surest ways to cut emissions in the near-term and avoid abrupt climate change.”

Banks, who joined IGSD in January of this year, was also one of the chief architects of the Major Economies Meeting, which the Obama Administration has continued as a forum to engage major emerging economies on energy and climate change.

“Dave Banks was a breath of fresh air when he arrived at CEQ,” said John Coequyt, a senior climate and energy representative of the Sierra Club. “He worked with the environmental community while he was there to get what he could out of the Bush administration. He was straightforward about what the Administration was doing and kept the environmental community in the loop and helped us focus on the areas where we could make progress under the Bush Administration. We miss having him over at CEQ, but look forward to working with him in his new position.”

Prior to joining CEQ, he served as the point person for U.S. climate diplomacy at the U.S. Mission to the EU, Brussels, Belgium, winning Superior Honor and Superior Performance Awards for advancing U.S. international environmental interests. He also worked as a CIA analyst and legislative fellow to Congressman Howard Berman, current Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

With tipping points 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 accelerated HCFC phase-out are critical to buying world leaders more time to negotiate a long-term post-2012 climate treaty. Banks and his colleagues at IGSD are continuing to focus on using the Montreal Protocol to protect climate by promoting a phase-down of HFC ‘super’ greenhouse gases under the treaty. Currently regulated under Kyoto, some HFCs have 11,000 times the warming potential of CO₂. Representatives from the Montreal Protocol and the UNFCCC will meet in July to discuss steps forward on the issue. Other important fast-action climate mitigation strategies include reducing black carbon soot, methane, and tropospheric ozone, as well as expanding bio-sequestration through biochar, and eliminating barriers to climate-friendly technology transfer.

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IGSD promotes just and sustainable societies and protects the environment by advancing the understanding, development and implementation of effective, accountable and democratic systems of governance for sustainable development. The Institute’s projects focus on climate change, research and education, capacity building, advice and advocacy, and media. IGSD also serves as the secretariat for the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE). For more information, please visit <http://igsd.org/>.