



Immediate Release
March 6, 2007

Contact: Alexander von Bismarck
Campaigns Director
Environmental Investigation Agency
(202) 483-6621
saschavonbismarck@eia-international.org

Governments Urged to Use Ozone Treaty to Buy Time Against Global Warming

Washington, D.C. – Pointing to recent scientific findings that actions taken under the ozone layer treaty could do more to combat climate change than the Kyoto Protocol, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is calling on governments to accelerate the phase-out of key gases to buy time against global warming.

The conservationists' appeal comes on the heels of the release of a new study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* showing that the climate protection already achieved by the Montreal Protocol is far greater than the reduction target of the Kyoto Protocol and that additional climate benefits of a similar magnitude could be achieved through an earlier phase-out of a category of gases called hydrochloroflourocarbons (HCFCs).

“This study is a call to action. By agreeing to stop producing HCFCs, we have the potential to reduce the effects of global warming in an unprecedented way,” stated EIA Campaigns Director Alexander von Bismarck.

EIA's own estimates indicate that accelerating the phase-out of HCFCs has the potential to prevent the production of 27.5 billion carbon-dioxide-equivalent tons of HCFCs—more than the total annual global emissions of carbon dioxide from the burning and flaring of fossil fuels.

HCFCs have been promoted by the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer as ozone layer-friendly alternatives to CFCs for refrigeration and air conditioning. Under the Montreal Protocol, developed countries are to phase out the production and consumption of HCFCs in 2015, while developing countries, such as China, need only freeze production levels in 2015 with a complete phase-out in 2040.

“The NAS article confirms that we have an incredible opportunity to use the most successful environmental agreement in history—the Montreal Protocol—to help protect the globe from climate change. I can't imagine a better way to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the treaty,” von Bismarck concluded.

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Editor's Notes:

- The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is dedicated to investigating, exposing and campaigning against the illegal trade in wildlife and the destruction of the natural environment.
- EIA first articulated the climate impacts of gases regulated by the ozone layer treaty last summer in a report entitled, "Turning up the Heat," which detailed the explosive growth in production of HCFCs in China. Highlighting the ozone layer and climate benefits that could result from earlier action on these chemicals, EIA campaigners have since been calling for an immediate HCFC production freeze and an acceleration of the phase-out schedule for this group of chemicals.
- The Montreal Protocol was agreed on January 1, 1987 and is now ratified by 188 countries. Under the Montreal Protocol and its amendments, ozone-depleting substances are to be reduced and eliminated through the development of chemical substitutes and alternative manufacturing processes (elimination is the final objective).
- The article, "The Importance of the Montreal Protocol in Protecting Climate," was published on March 5, 2007 in The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The authors are Guus J.M. Velders, Stephen O. Andersen, John S. Daniel, David W. Fahey and Mack McFarland.

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