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NEW REPORT HIGHLIGHTS WARMING RISK FROM F-GASES

London - June 5 - Emissions from fluorinated greenhouse gases (HFCs, PFCs, and SF6) are growing quickly and could represent 15%* or more of all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, according to a report published today by the MultiSectoral Initiative on Potent Industrial Greenhouse Gases.

Using damning new evidence, report exposes the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for promoting these harmful HFCs as an alternative to CFCs in an effort to implement the Montreal Protocol which is concerned only with ozone depleting gases. ?The Montreal Protocol and its 'policy community' needs a total shake-up to make it genuinely atmosphere friendly rather than ozone friendly at the expense of global climate? says report author, Chris Rose.

The report criticizes UNEP and the fluorocarbon industry for portraying these fluorocarbon gases (HFCs) as "benign" or an "environmentally friendly" replacement for CFCs now phasing out under the Montreal protocol despite the fact that these gases are hundreds to tens of thousands times more potent than CO2 in their global warming potential.

"Agencies such as UNEP and USEPA have a mandate to eliminate CFCs and HCFCs for ozone reasons, and over time have convinced themselves that this imperative justifies the use of HFCs. The awkward fact that HFCs are powerful greenhouse gases gets rejected from their thinking." Says Chris Rose.

The report - F is For Forgotten - also exposes the way in which the lobbying efforts of the fluorocarbon industry to produce more HFCs have proved successful. Led by trade groups such as the Alliance for Responsible Atmospheric Policy and European Partnership for Energy and the Environment (EPEE), with companies such as Mitsui-Dupont, Daikin, Ineos (ex ICI), Solvay, Atofina, Ausimont, Rhodia and Toshiba the flouorocarbon industry, argues Rose, employs a cynical strategy to dominate or 'capture' the committees that draft and set international product standards in order to ensure future standards rule out the use of proven low-GWP climate friendly alternatives technologies using ammonia and hydrocarbon refrigerants.

"UNEP's advice is supposed to be objective but it's consistently biased" adds Rose. "It makes obstacles out of routine safety measures and warns against using hydrocarbons even though the record in practice does not support this."

To illustrate this failure of governance and democracy the report details the case of EN378, a draft standard about to be reconsidered at a CEN crisis meeting in Switzerland on 6/7 June 2002. Drawn up by committees dominated by HFC makers and users, this standard would effectively prohibit 80% of the hydrocarbon-based (non HFC) air conditioning systems (e.g. for offices) on the market. If this happens then the commitments of companies such as Coca Cola, Unilever, Body Shop, BP, Tesco, Sainsburys and Scottish & Newcastle (brewers) to use hydrocarbons instead of HFCs, will become impossible to implement.

Rose also believes "many environmentalists neglect the scale to which the F-gas industry has turned implementation of the Montreal Protocol to their own advantage. The result has been a failure to challenge the direct culpability of industrialists and politicians for greenhouse pollution by F-gases."

He also challenges the long established scientific convention that expresses total global warming effect by any gas (Global Warming Potential) in units of 'carbon dioxide equivalent'. "This convention has created a shorthand that has obscured the need to cut the net emissions and the effect of methane, nitrous oxide and most notably HFCs," says Rose.

F for Forgotten lists companies utilising non-HFC alternatives such as Coca Cola and Unilever but notes that without considerable public pressure and regulatory action to ban HFCs and promote alternatives, the domination of the fluorocarbon industry will continue and HFCs will become the new CFCs.

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Editors notes:

F for Forgotten was written by Chris Rose, former deputy director of Greenpeace UK and Strategic advisor to Greenpeace International. He is a founder of www.mipiggs.com and co-ordinator of the Multisectorial Initiative on Potent Industrial Greenhouse Gases (MIPIGGS)

MIPIGGS is a multisectorial information exchanging and policy development body focusing on measures and technologies to eliminate industrial greenhouse gases. Member of MIPIGGS include, among others, Greenpeace; Calor Gas; Friends of the Earth; Danish Technology Institute; Climate Action Network ..

F for Forgotten makes the following key recommendations:

If the world is to head off F-gas pollution before it blossoms into another disaster on the scale of CFCs then Governments should:

- cap the production of each gas
- stop the construction of more factories to produce HFCs
- set phase-out dates
- require the systematic use of alternatives to HFCs
- enforce far tighter controls on PFCs and SF6
- promote substitution technologies for all F-gases
- change the strategy of the Montreal Protocol fundamentally to bring it up to date and make it atmosphere-friendly not just ozone friendly - working with rather than against the aims and objectives of the Kyoto Protocol.
- make global warming potential and not just ozone depletion potential a criterion for funding under the Montreal Protocol's Multilateral Fund - at the moment climate-impact is not considered.

UNEP should:

- Put a prominent written health-warning on all its literature and web pages where HFCs are raised in the context of substitution for HCFCs or HFCs, pointing out that HFCs are very powerful global warming gases that cause climate change.
- Classify HFCs as transitional not long or medium term replacements for CFCs or HCFCs.
- Accept that HFCs are not a successful part of the Montreal Protocol but, at least now with abundant alternatives available, a failure.
- Acknowledge clearly that HFCs are a developing into a rapidly growing climate problem and that the Montreal Protocol is a climate threat if run on HFCs.
- Stop using misleading terms like ozone friendly and environmentally safer if these are applied to climate-unfriendly and climate-dangerous chemicals such as CFCs or PFCs.
- Update all its literature to advise all users that they should follow its own policy of first replacing CFCs or HCFCs with NIK 'Not In Kind' substitutes and not with HFCs
- Stop referring to HFCs as 'the preferred' alternative.
- Make it clear that if industry prefers HFCs then it does not.
- Be non-judgemental about the prospects for uptake of alternatives such as hydrocarbons and ammonia.
- Stop raising safety measures as if they were arguments against ammonia or hydrocarbons.
- Orient MLF expenditure, policies and advice to help developing countries move towards the Danish, Austrian, German model (phasing out HFCs) rather than the American model of HFC usage.
- Promote NIK climate-friendly alternatives that do not use greenhouse gases.

*This figure is expressed as a percentage of the total Greenhouse emissions using figures from 1990 - ie a 1990 baseline.