

Working Group 8: How to develop optimal time-framed air pollution and climate change policies for the next decades?

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Background

National, regional and international air pollution control efforts can play an important role in reducing climate change, including the reduction of short-term forcers such as black carbon, tropospheric ozone, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), and methane. Such authorities face the challenge of developing additional policies to take this into account in their work, along with the trade-offs between air pollution and climate change. It also is important for these authorities to continue to recognize the importance of public health protection from air pollution effects while addressing the issue of climate change and to develop optimal strategies to address both air pollution and climate change. The co-benefits that will be achieved from a holistic policy approach will be more effective than separate policies and often can be deployed more quickly than other climate policies, and can produce a faster response from the climate system.

This working group discussed the most appropriate paths to make a critical difference and how to begin fast action. There are successful existing agreements and networks in place that can address the synergies and trade-offs of air pollution and climate change now without replacing ongoing efforts. It is necessary to take action to fill information gaps, assist developing countries, and show vision and leadership.

Conclusions

1. The efforts to proceed urgently in the UNFCCC to address CO₂ should not slow down while taking steps to address the interactions between climate change and air quality. National authorities should consider CO₂ abatement measures, in the short-term and long-term, which would contribute best to address air pollution.
2. More effort is needed to raise the profile of the links with air pollution within the climate change arena. Work will continue post-Copenhagen on black carbon and tropospheric ozone (e.g. UNEP Assessment, Arctic Council Task Force) as well as on HFCs (e.g. Montreal Protocol) and methane (e.g. Methane-to-Markets). It is not clear what actions will be taken based on their results.
3. The climate impact of short-lived climate forcers (SLCFs) is substantial and hence reductions in, black carbon, global ozone, methane, and HFCs would significantly mitigate near term climate change and contribute to the achievement of long-term climate targets (e.g., the overall global mean surface temperature increase should not exceed 2 degree Centigrade above pre-industrial levels).

4. Agreements on emission reductions of SLCFs may proceed faster at the national and regional level. In particular, agreements will go faster if existing national and regional structures are used. International coordination could also be helpful to harmonize, promote and strengthen these efforts. Additional international efforts also may be warranted.

5. Examples of existing institutional structures that can help with climate mitigation include the use of CLRTAP and the Montreal Protocol. The CLRTAP is a successful multi-national emission control instrument and could play a leading role in building regional instruments around the world. It could supplement the work already begun through its outreach activities and by the Global Atmospheric Pollution Forum.

Recommendations

1. UNEP, CLRTAP and other relevant institutions should review existing national, regional, and international air pollution control efforts to determine where they can be effectively used to help mitigate climate change. (UNEP, CLRTAP, international organizations)
2. Extend the revision of the CLRTAP Gothenburg Protocol to include consideration of the climate effects of air pollutants. This should include the control of black carbon and tropospheric ozone and its precursors. (CLRTAP)
3. Create a Task Force¹ under CLRTAP to investigate the physical and economic aspects of climate change and air quality interactions. Take note of and coordinate with the work going on under UNEP and the Arctic Council on SLCFs. Set a 1-year timeframe for the Task Force to provide the first report and recommendations to the Executive Body and the Working Group on Strategies and Review to include in the Gothenburg negotiations. Align resources within the Convention accordingly. (CLRTAP)
4. UNEP, CLRTAP, and other relevant institutions should provide outreach to developing nations either directly or through regional networks to assist in the creation of policies to address SLCFs. Investigate the potential and appropriateness of financing mechanisms for emission reductions of SLCFs. (countries, international organizations, UNEP, CLRTAP)
5. Explore the need for developing a protocol to address background ozone on the hemispheric scale with potential participation of all countries in the Northern Hemisphere. (CLRTAP, UNEP)

¹ The working group discussed several ways in which to organize the work under CLRTAP. At least one member believes it would be a better approach to have all the relevant Task Forces under CLRTAP address the issue rather than starting a new one.

6. Establish stronger links between relevant bodies in the air quality and climate change areas. (CLRTAP, UNFCCC, IPCC, UNEP)
7. Take on board in the fifth assessment report an analysis of the air pollution benefits and disbenefits. (IPCC)