



Press Brief

INDO-US TASK FORCE TO STUDY HFC PHASE DOWN

New Delhi, February 18, 2011

India today hosted a Joint Indo-US workshop on HydroFluoroCarbons (HFCs) in New Delhi. The workshop was led on the Indian side by the Minister of State (I/C), Mr. Jairam Ramesh, and from the US side by Mr. Daniel A. Reifsnyder, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment. In addition to government representatives, the workshop was attended by a large number of industry participants from both India and the US. Civil society groups from US and India, as well as observers from the EU, also attended the event.

Speaking at the event, Minister Ramesh noted that India has been a responsible participant in the Montreal Protocol, which is the world's most successful international environmental agreement. The Protocol has made available both technology and finance (approx US\$300million over a 10-12 year period received by India). India made the transitions out of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), an ozone depleting gas, by August 2008, 17 months in advance of its commitment. India has already unveiled a roadmap to phase out HCFCs, another ozone depleting gas, by 2030. Further, India recognizes that while HFCs, a substitute for CFCs and HCFCs, are a 'solution' from an ozone depletion perspective, they are a 'problem' from climate change perspective, since they have high global warming potential. India therefore recognizes the importance of addressing this problem, because of its own multiple vulnerabilities to climate change.

Minister Ramesh stressed on thinking innovatively and considering action at four levels. First, action at the multilateral level, through for example, new or modified international treaties and multilateral funds. Second, action at the bilateral level, through for example, workshops such as the one being undertaken today. Third, action at the national level, through autonomous actions, for example, national-level regulations and incentives, much like India is already doing as part of its energy efficiency agenda through the Bureau of Energy Efficiency. And fourth, action at the industry to industry level, where there are enormous opportunities for technology development and cooperation, with US companies in particular. India could well emerge as a technology supplier in this field, through indigenous development and joint ventures, especially as the bulk of the incremental market will be in India. The Minister noted that the current discourse is focused primarily on the first of the four levels he described, and said that there is a need to think more broadly. With international financing and technology support, there is no reason why India should not lead in the phase-down of HFCs.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Reifsnyder noted the need for the transition out of HFCs, and emphasized that an early transition would help avoid high costs. He emphasized that the US was advocating a "phase-down", and not a "phase-out" of HFCs. He also stressed on the need to think in multi-dimensional ways to address the problem caused by HFCs, by for example, considering an amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which would allow HFCs consumption and production to be treated under it, while leaving the accounting of HFCs under the Kyoto Protocol of the UNFCCC.

The Workshop provided an excellent forum for industry participants from both countries to express their views and share their concerns about the proposed transition out of HFCs. **At the conclusion of the meeting it was decided to establish a Joint Indo-US Technical Task Force comprising of industry representatives, scientists, and government officials to suggest options for HFC phase-down. The Joint Task Force will submit its Report latest by August 1, 2011.**