

SHORT-CIRCUITING THE FAST-ACTING : 6 COUNTRIES START A PROGRAM TO CUT SHORT-LIVED CLIMATE CHANGE POLLUTANTS

February 21, 2012 By Jenna Guggenheim



Last week, the State Department announced the formation of the [Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants](#) (Coalition). In what many are calling a response to the extremely slow pace at which the international community is working to negotiate a global climate change treaty, the United States and five other countries are launching the program in an effort to reduce emissions of the most common short-lived, fast-acting climate change pollutants.

Representatives from Canada, Bangladesh, Ghana, Mexico, and Sweden joined [Hillary Clinton](#) in ushering in the effort which will target emissions of [methane](#), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) and [black carbon](#), which are responsible for about one-third of the global warming problem. These three pollutants stay in the atmosphere for just days or years, unlike [carbon dioxide](#), which remains for about 100 years.

The United States will contribute \$15 million and Canada will give \$2 million to initiate the program. This money will help to recruit other countries to participate and will begin to fund efforts like replacing traditional cookstoves with more efficient models, banning the open burning of agricultural waste, modernizing brick kiln, and capturing methane from coal mines, landfills and rice paddies. The coalition estimates that reducing emissions of these fast-acting pollutants could lower global temperatures by 0.5 degrees Celsius by 2050 – a fairly significant dent in the [2 degrees Celsius reduction below industrial levels](#) scientists say will be required to thwart a climate change disaster.

The Coalition made clear that its efforts would not be a substitute for a global regulation to prevent climate change (particularly in the form of carbon dioxide emissions), rather it “is meant to complement” such actions. “Such actions” however, have been slow-going. The [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC), which includes more than 180 countries, concluded their most recent [meetings in Durban, South Africa](#), with little progress. The Coalition hopes that this initiative will cause real, assessable, and relatively-quick success. In addition, many appreciate that most of the benefits are likely to be realized where the reductions are actually implemented, thus, reductions of these emissions in the developing world will create benefits there.