



**Slowing Arctic Warming by Reducing Short-lived Climate Forcers
Status of Oslo Group -- Arctic Council Initiative
September 25, 2008**

The Arctic is at a critical juncture due to recent unprecedented warming. Arctic temperatures have increased at almost twice the average global rate over the past decade, accompanied by earlier and longer melt seasons, increasing melt from Greenland's ice sheet, and large reductions in summer sea ice. These unexpectedly-rapid changes have raised the specter of reaching Arctic and Arctic-influenced global tipping points that would lead to significant sea level rise and methane release from melting permafrost, the consequences of which would reach far beyond the Arctic region itself. Rapid change in the region has already severely challenged the ability of Arctic indigenous communities to adapt, and the environmental impacts of swiftly rising temperatures threatens regional biodiversity as local species cannot evolve quickly enough to survive.

Reductions in CO₂ will serve as the backbone of any meaningful effort to reduce long-term warming in the Arctic region; yet, because of CO₂'s long residence time in the atmosphere (~100 yrs), even if all CO₂ emissions ceased today, the reduction in global warming would not occur quickly enough to prevent the increasingly-rapid changes we see in today's Arctic environment. At the same time, recent science indicates that several shorter-lived climate agents – black carbon, tropospheric ozone, and methane -- collectively have a significant temperature impact on the Arctic as well. Research on these short-lived forcers has developed rapidly in the past five years, building on the earlier work of the IPCC and air pollution control communities, with an emerging consensus that addressing these agents may bring significant near-term Arctic climate benefit.

In November, 2007, a meeting in Oslo of Arctic policymakers and scientists organized by the Climate Policy Center of Clean Air—Cool Planet (CA-CP), the Norwegian Air Quality Research Institute (NILU), and the Clean Air Task Force (CATF) recommended that efforts should be made to interest the Arctic Council, among others, in considering the potential benefits of reducing short-lived climate forcers. At the behest of what became known as the “Oslo Group”, CA-CP's Executive Vice President for Policy briefed the Senior Arctic Officials at the Arctic Council's April, 2008 meeting in Svalvaer, Norway, following which the Council tasked a key working group, the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), to organize a workshop aimed at producing recommendations for possible Council action on these short-lived forcers. AMAP invited CA-CP and CATF to assist in the preparation of the workshop.

On September 15-16 2008, approximately 60 scientists and policymakers met at AMAP headquarters in Oslo to discuss the state of current scientific and technical understanding, and propose potential policy options. Representation came from six of the eight Council nations, including a strong senior-level delegation from U.S. EPA and the State Department as well as senior scientists from NOAA. The meeting produced a summary with 10 potential actions for formal Council consideration and possible integration into national, regional and multilateral policies. The actions recommended for consideration include specific mitigation measures (such as a cessation of springtime agricultural burning in Arctic nations to decrease deposition of BC), as well as additional research efforts and outreach to other international bodies such as the International Maritime Organization and the UNFCCC.

The Council will consider the workshop recommendations further among the AMAP national Heads of Delegation, the Arctic Council Senior Officials meeting in northern Norway in mid-November; and potentially, adopt them in some form at the ministerial level in April 2009. The recommendations will also be raised more informally at a meeting of Arctic Deputy Ministers planning to meet in mid-October 2008 in Tromsø, Norway.

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