



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

SEP 08 2010

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Dear Senator Webb:

Thank you for your letter of August 4 to President Obama concerning actions to address black carbon pollution around the world. We have been asked to respond on the President's behalf.

We fully agree that emissions of black carbon have deleterious impacts on human health, air quality, and regional and global climate. We also agree with your assessment that the United States has achieved significant improvements in black carbon control in recent decades and we expect to achieve additional reductions in coming years, as existing clean air policies on diesel emissions come into effect. Additionally, the EPA is preparing a report to Congress, to be delivered in the spring of 2011, addressing mitigation options and benefits both domestically and internationally.

In addressing emissions of black carbon beyond our borders, we have pursued a two-track strategy of enhanced bilateral/regional cooperation and international negotiation. Our bilateral/regional efforts can further be divided into those focused primarily on air quality in developing countries and those that address climate change in regions thought to be particularly sensitive to the warming effects of black carbon.

Efforts focused on air quality have included bilateral capacity building activities between the EPA and their counterparts in China, India, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, and other developing countries. They have also included active U.S. engagement in the multilateral efforts of the Global Air Pollution Forum, the Clean Air Initiatives in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, and cooperation under the auspices of UNEP and the Global Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles. These initiatives have successfully engaged developing countries on critical issues of health and environment while providing win-win solutions that reduce black carbon for both air quality and climate benefit. We are actively working to expand and to strengthen these productive partnerships.

The Honorable
Jim Webb,
United States Senate.

Cooperation focused on climate protection has targeted two regions thought to be particularly sensitive to the warming effects of black carbon: the Arctic and the Himalayas. In the Arctic, we have led efforts within the Arctic Council to study the effects of black carbon on Arctic climate and ice melt. The U.S. and Norway are co-chairing two efforts there: a short-lived Climate Forcers Expert Group focusing on the state of the science on black carbon, methane and tropospheric ozone; and a Taskforce on short-lived Climate Forcers, to identify mitigation opportunities. This Taskforce will issue its first report, focused largely on black carbon, in May 2011 at the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting. We have further worked to accelerate Arctic cooperation through our December 2009 announcement of a \$5 million Arctic Black Carbon Initiative, designed to jump-start cooperation to reduce emissions from diesel engines, combined heat and power, and open fires in Arctic countries. Activities under this initiative begin this fall.

In the Himalayan region, we have engaged in discussions with India and China to address particulate pollution, including black carbon. At the 2010 U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue, the countries agreed to initiate discussions on short-lived climate forcers, a category that includes black carbon. In India, we have engaged on the critical issue of emissions from cook stoves. The USAID mission in New Delhi recently committed a \$1 million investment towards applied research to increase adoption of improved cook stoves. In addition, USAID has commissioned two analyses to better understand the impact of black carbon on climate change, and glacial melt in particular, in the Himalaya. These studies have been recently completed and will inform programming needs.

Finally, we continue to engage in international negotiations relevant to black carbon. Under the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), the U.S. co-chairs a new Black Carbon Expert Group formed to identify options to address black carbon for climate benefit under existing LRTAP air pollution Protocols. This Expert Group will present its report to LRTAP in December 2010. At the March 2010 meeting of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the U.S. put forward a joint submission with Sweden and Norway to address black carbon emissions

from international shipping. This submission currently awaits consideration by the Parties of the IMO. Within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the U.S. has expressed support for a work program on near-term mitigation options, including black carbon, to be included in a post-2012 agreement, and is investigating opportunities for additional black carbon related work within or alongside the UNFCCC.

Thank you again for your letter. We share your interest in reducing black carbon emissions for health and climate benefit. The Department is working to expand international cooperation in this area. We hope this information is helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact us again if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard R. Verma". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "R".

Richard R. Verma
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs