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ALAN SCHEIN PHOTOGR./CORBIS

The Montreal treaty, which came into force in 1989, has implementation experts in virtually every country and has already succeeded in reducing 96 chemicals by 97% each, Zaelke says. "It's a winning record, and we need to give the treaty this shot."

In 2007, Velders' team looked at the effect of the Montreal Protocol and found that its

incidental greenhouse-gas reductions — equivalent to 11 billion tonnes of CO₂ annually by 2010 — are five to six times greater than those of the Kyoto Protocol. Montreal participants had already agreed to phase out chlorofluorocarbons by 2010 and hydrochlorofluorocarbons by 2040, but the Velders study helped convince them to accelerate phasing out the latter by a decade in order to capture the climate benefits.

The latest study carries that work forward and suggests that the problem posed by HFCs could be several times larger than projected by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its 2007 assessment. Using the IPCC's baseline economic scenarios, the work assumes that refrigerant technologies will be deployed at levels roughly equal to those in the developed world today. By mid-century, emissions in currently developing countries would rise to levels eight times higher than those in developed nations.

Venkatachalam Ramaswamy, a coordinating lead author of the IPCC chapter covering HFCs who was not involved in the study, called the paper "a very good piece of work".

"It elevates the importance of HFCs in terms of climate forcing to a level higher than we may have thought initially," says Ramaswamy, a scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory in Princeton, New Jersey.

Still, he says, it "doesn't significantly detract from the attention that CO₂ and methane should be getting." ■

Jeff Tollefson

G8 cancels science parley

The Italian government has caught scientists off guard by cancelling the G8 science and technology meeting that was to have begun on 25 June.

The meeting would have brought together science ministers of the G8 nations to discuss issues such as how to monitor climate change and maintain environment-friendly energy supplies.

It was one of ten ministerial meetings to prepare for the main G8 summit, in L'Aquila, Italy, in July. The summit is now left without a formal mechanism for introducing science input.

"We were surprised and disappointed by the cancellation," says James Wilsdon, director of science policy for Britain's Royal Society. The society is one of 13 national academies — one from each of the G8 countries, plus one each from South Africa, India, Mexico, China and Brazil — that had prepared a joint statement on climate and energy policy to funnel through the meeting.

The Italian government gave no clear reason for the cancellation, the first time a planned ministerial meeting has been cancelled in advance of a G8 summit. Italian newspapers have reported that government officials are referring variously to concerns about security and failure to complete translation of relevant preparatory documents.

Giuseppe Fioroni, science spokesman for Italy's opposition Democratic Party, says that the cancellation — which he puts down to infighting between ministries in the Italian government over the core themes of the research G8 meeting — is "humiliating for Italy as the host country".

The Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research did not respond to interview requests.

An official at the German research ministry said they had been told that the meeting would be reconvened in some form this autumn. "It is always good when G8 ministers meet," he said. "It does not have to be before a summit."

But Fioroni says a research meeting has meaning only if it takes place before the main summit. ■

Alison Abbott

"This is very extraordinary, to be expelled from the faculty," he says.

"It is quite astonishing," agrees Lennart Ståhle, a senior adviser at the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education in Stockholm.

At its peak, the genetics institute was home to about 80 researchers. The two dozen researchers there now will be reposted elsewhere within the university, and the existing genetics labs largely turned into offices.

University officials and researchers say that the reorganization was brought on by a series of compounding problems, many of which other universities also face, Ståhle

says. At Lund, officials say, too many young researchers were kept on without outside funding to support them.

The annual budget deficit of the Department of Cell and Organism Biology, which oversees the genetics institute, has been ballooning over the past couple of years, increasing by up to 100,000 Swedish kronor (US\$12,500) a week, and is expected to hit 19 million kronor by year-end.

The science faculty board has approved a 10-million-kronor subsidy, which, combined with staff reductions, is intended to eliminate the

deficit in three years.

Ecologist Torbjörn von Schantz, dean of the science faculty, said he "deeply regretted" the "tragic" cuts in staff, which he acknowledged will reduce future graduate-student admissions. But he added that the steps are necessary to save money.

"We see the restructuring of biology in Lund as a key to addressing new areas of research," he says.

However, several other professors privately questioned whether students would want to come to a department in turmoil. ■

Rex Dalton

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