

**Climate Change:
It is Still Time to Act!**
*An Overview Based on the IPCC
Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)*
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IPCC Vice-Chair
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BNP-PariBas-Fortis, Brussels, 21 April 2015

**Thanks to the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO)
and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to my team at the
Université catholique de Louvain for their support**

Why the IPCC ?

Established by WMO and UNEP in 1988

to provide **policy-makers** with an **objective source of information** about

- causes of climate change,
- potential environmental and socio-economic impacts,
- possible response options (adaptation & mitigation).

WMO=World Meteorological Organization

UNEP= United Nations Environment Programme

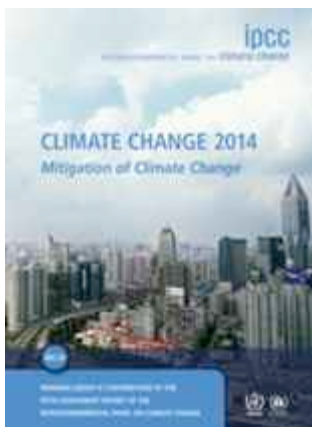




What is happening in the climate system?



What are the risks?



What can be done?

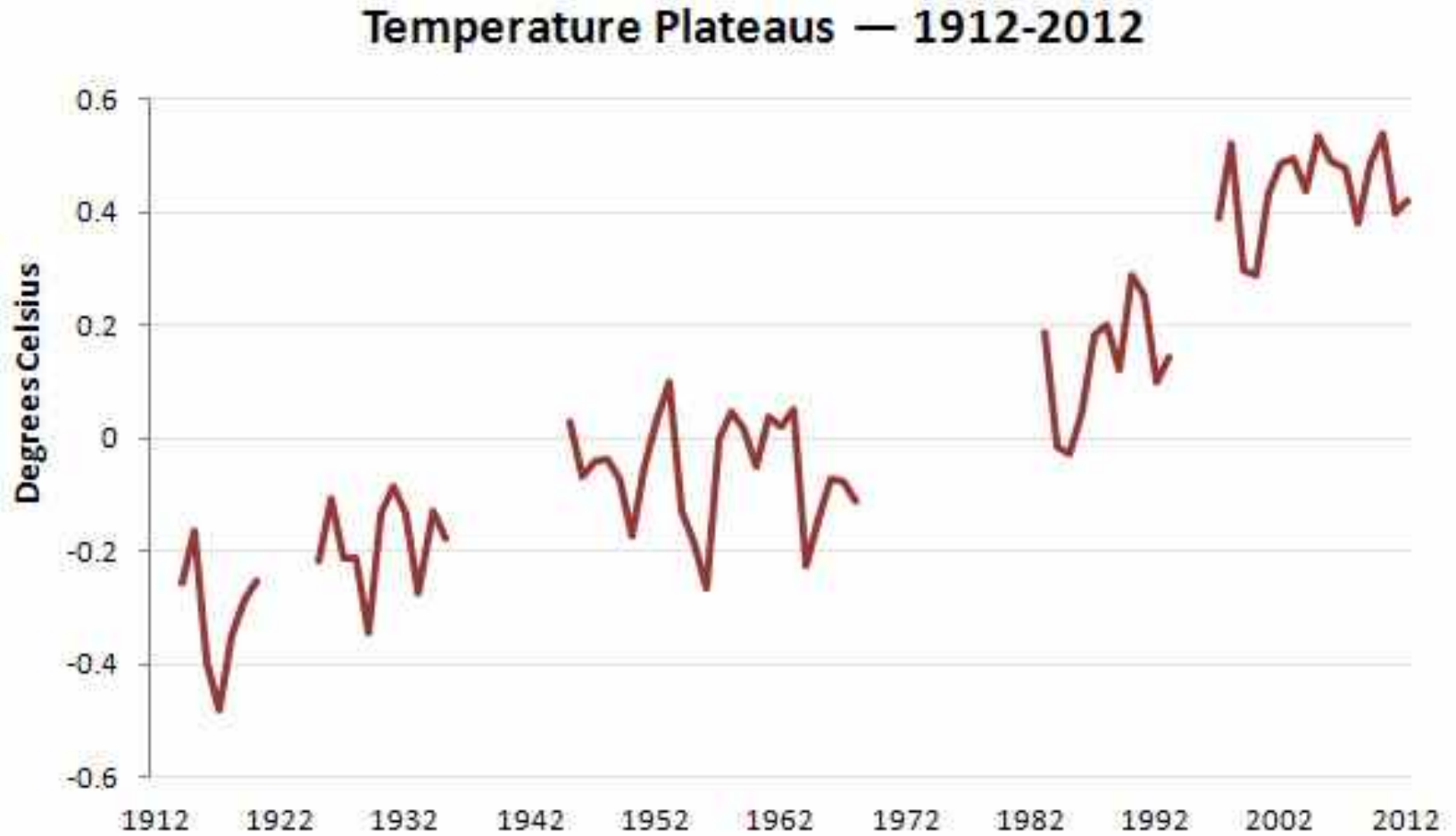
Key messages from IPCC AR5

- **Human influence on the climate system is clear**
- **Continued emissions of greenhouse gases will increase the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems**
- **While climate change is a threat to sustainable development, there are many opportunities to integrate mitigation, adaptation, and the pursuit of other societal objectives**
- **Humanity has the means to limit climate change and build a more sustainable and resilient future**

Temperature Change From 1961-1990 Average

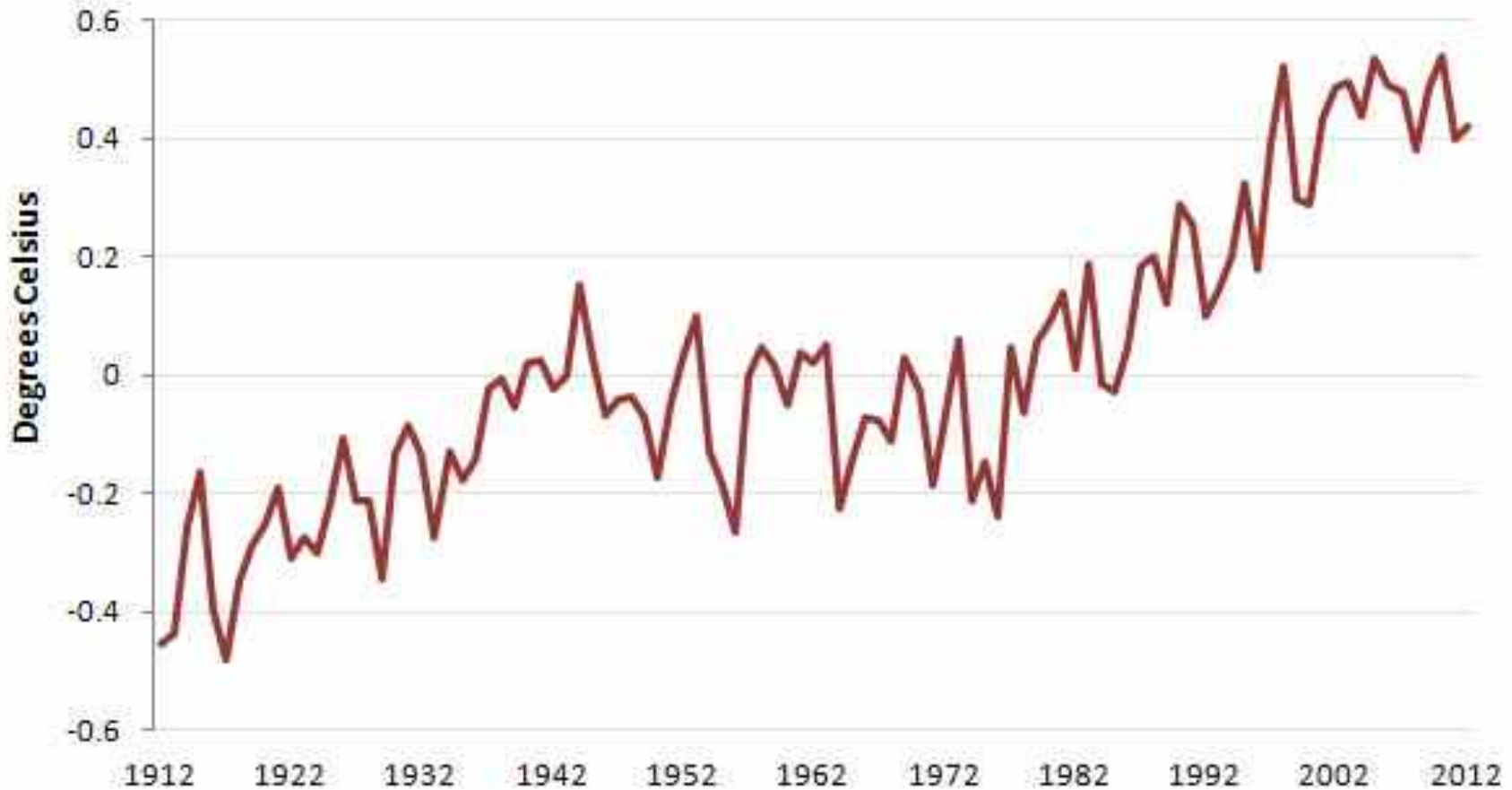


Lying With Statistics, Global Warming Edition



Lying With Statistics, Global Warming Edition

Temperature Change From 1961-1990 Average



Plateau Glacier (1961) (Alaska)



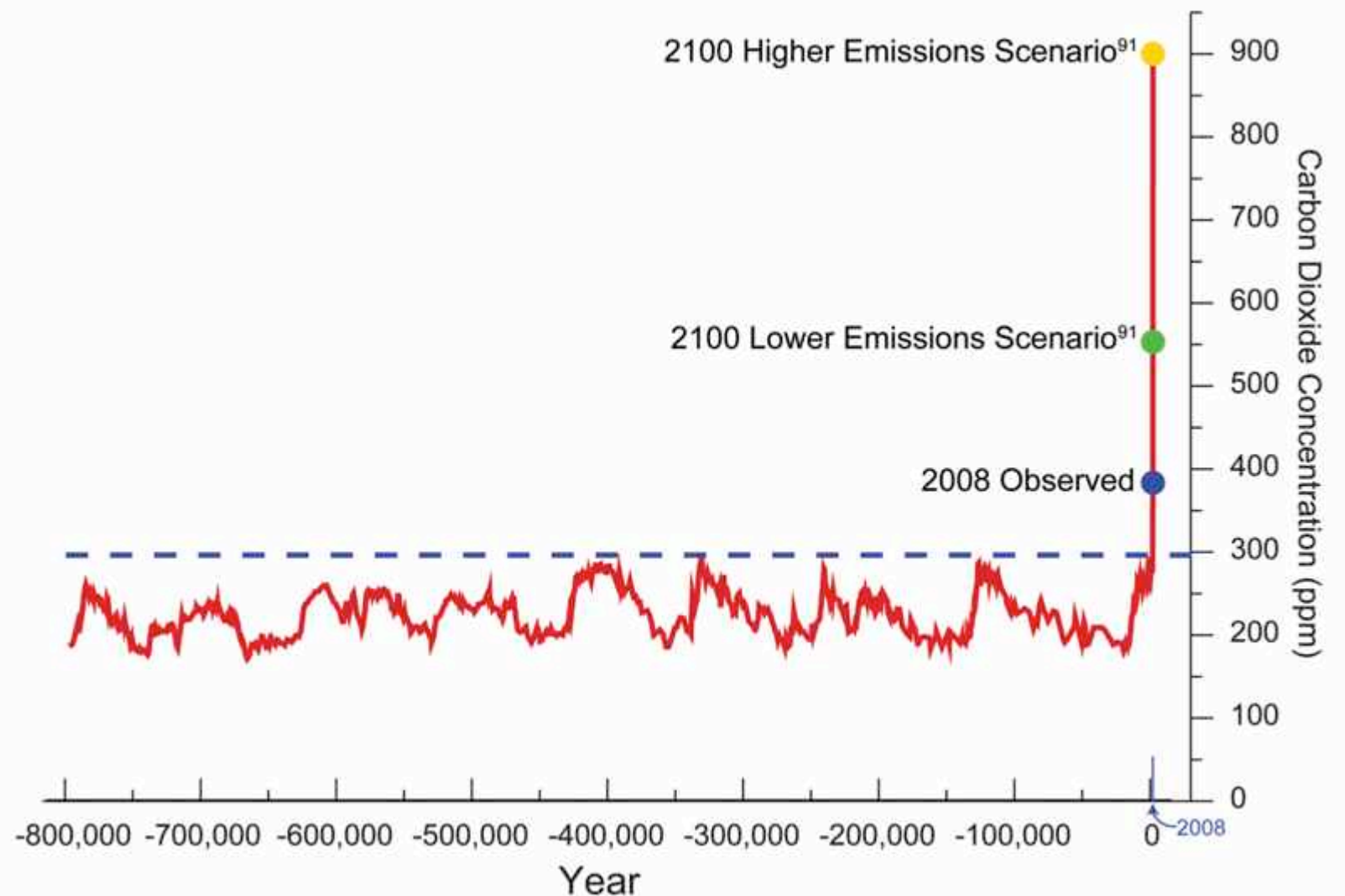
http://www.weather.com/news/science/environment/alaskas-glaciers-capturing-earth-changing-our-eyes-20131125?cm_ven=Email&cm_cat=ENVIRONMENT_us_share

Plateau Glacier (2003) (Alaska)

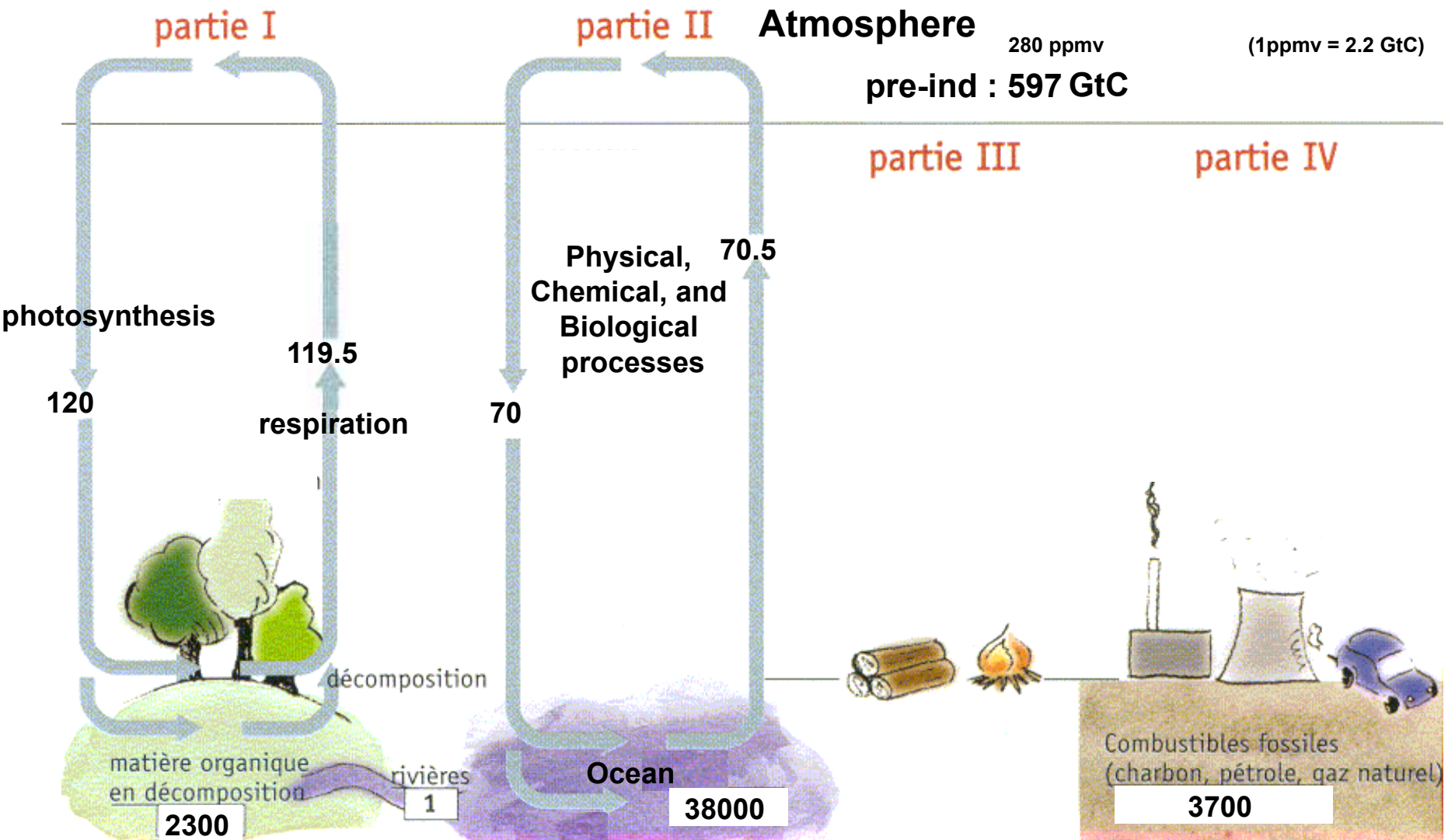


http://www.weather.com/news/science/environment/alaskas-glaciers-capturing-earth-changing-our-eyes-20131125?cm_ven=Email&cm_cat=ENVIRONMENT_us_share

Atmospheric CO₂ over the last 800,000 years



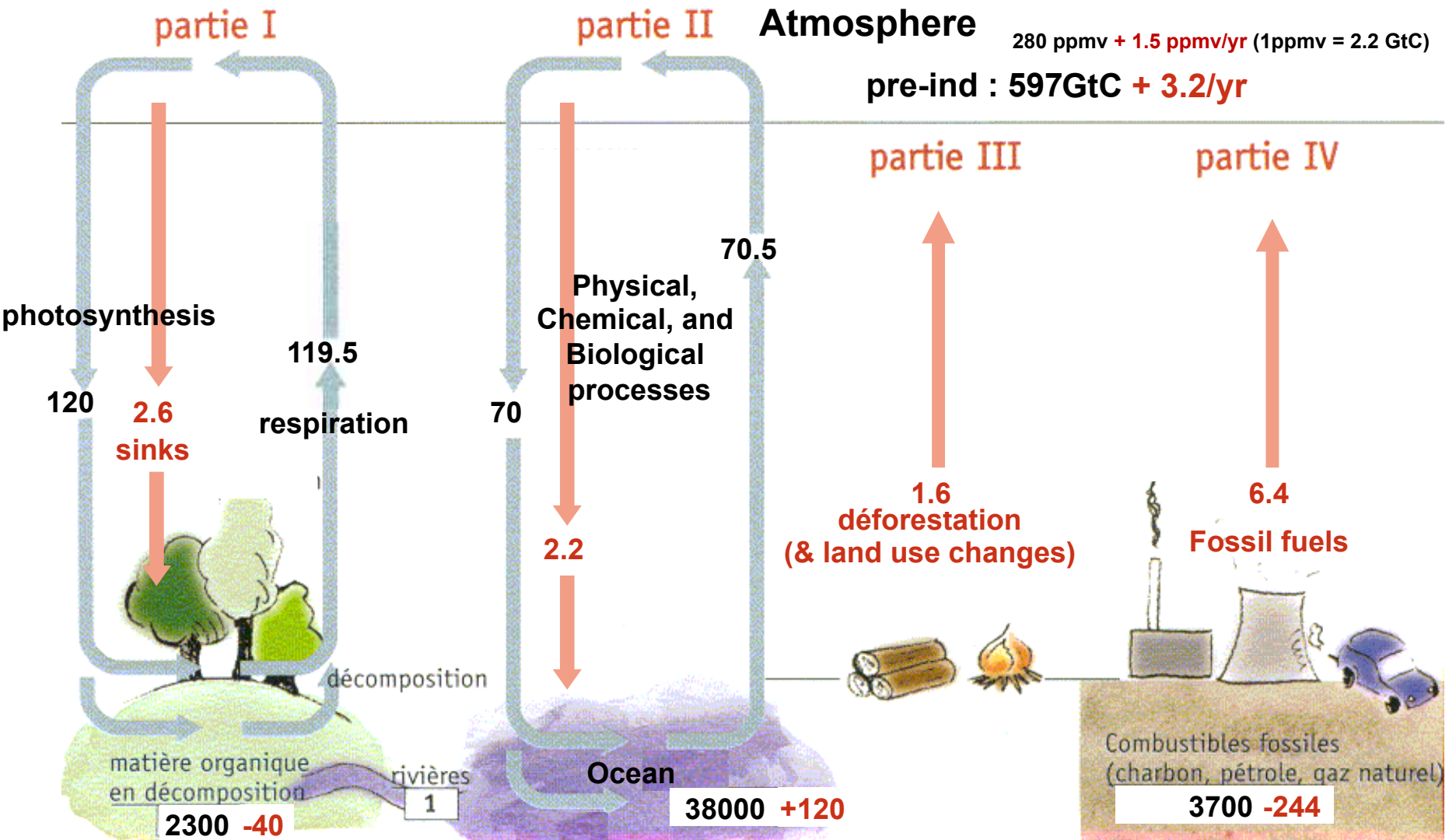
Carbon cycle: unperturbed fluxes



Units: GtC (billions tons of carbon) or GtC/year (multiply by 3.7 to get GtCO₂)

Carbon cycle: perturbed by human activities

(numbers for the decade 1990-1999s, based on IPCC AR4)



Units: GtC (billions tons of carbon) or GtC/year

Stocks!

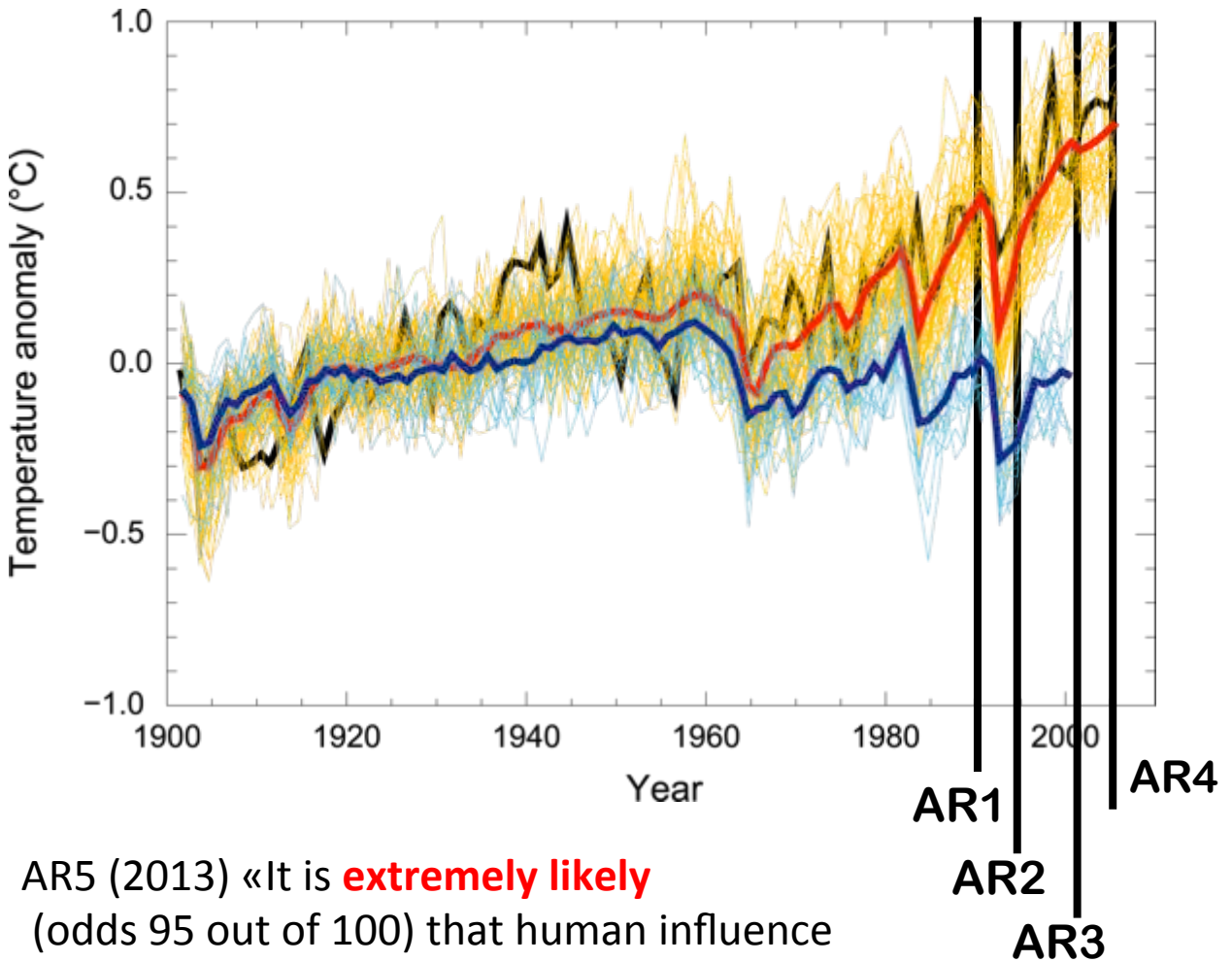
A Progression of Understanding: Greater and Greater Certainty in Attribution

AR1 (1990):
“unequivocal detection
not likely for a decade”

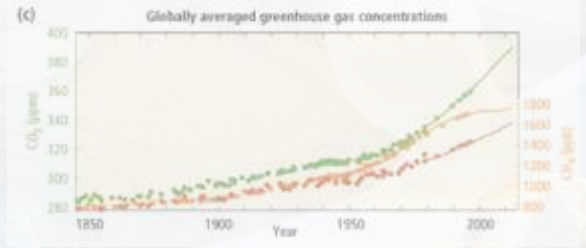
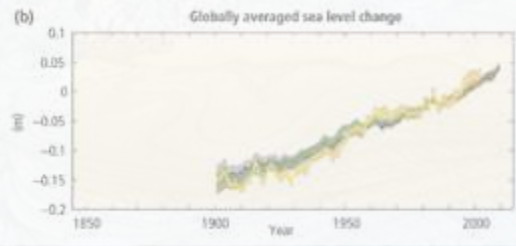
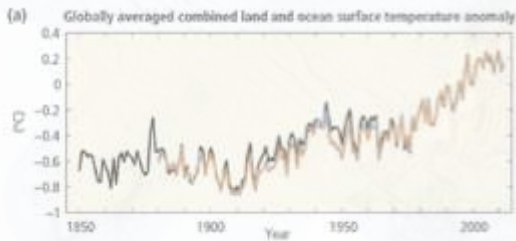
AR2 (1995): “balance
of evidence suggests
discernible human
influence”

AR3 (2001): “most of
the warming of the
past 50 years is **likely**
(odds 2 out of 3) due
to human activities”

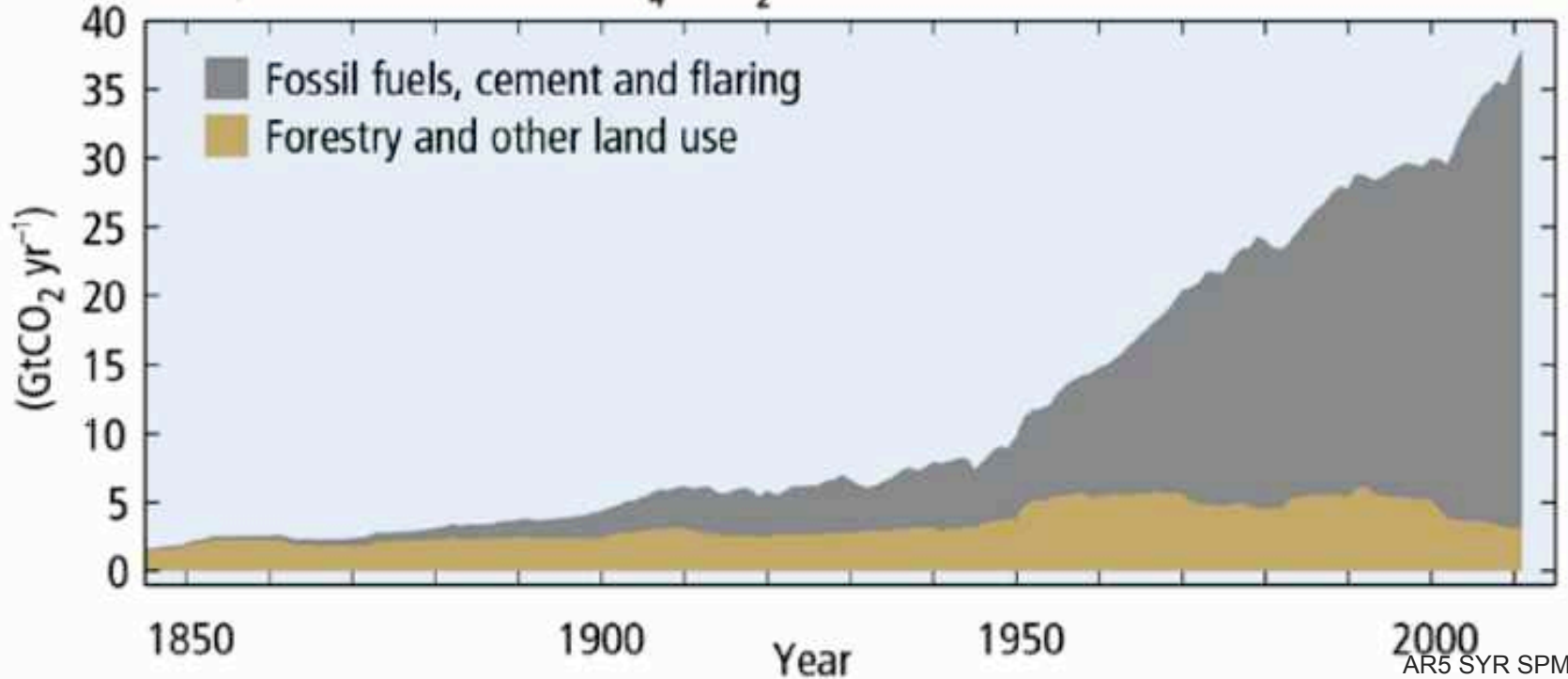
AR4 (2007): “most of
the warming is **very
likely** (odds 9 out of 10)
due to greenhouse
gases”



AR5 (2013) «It is **extremely likely**
(odds 95 out of 100) that human influence
has been the dominant cause... »



(d) Global anthropogenic CO₂ emissions
 Quantitative information of CH₄ and N₂O emission time series from 1850 to 1970 is limited



AR5 SYR SPM

Sources of emissions

Energy production remains the primary driver of GHG emissions



2010 GHG emissions

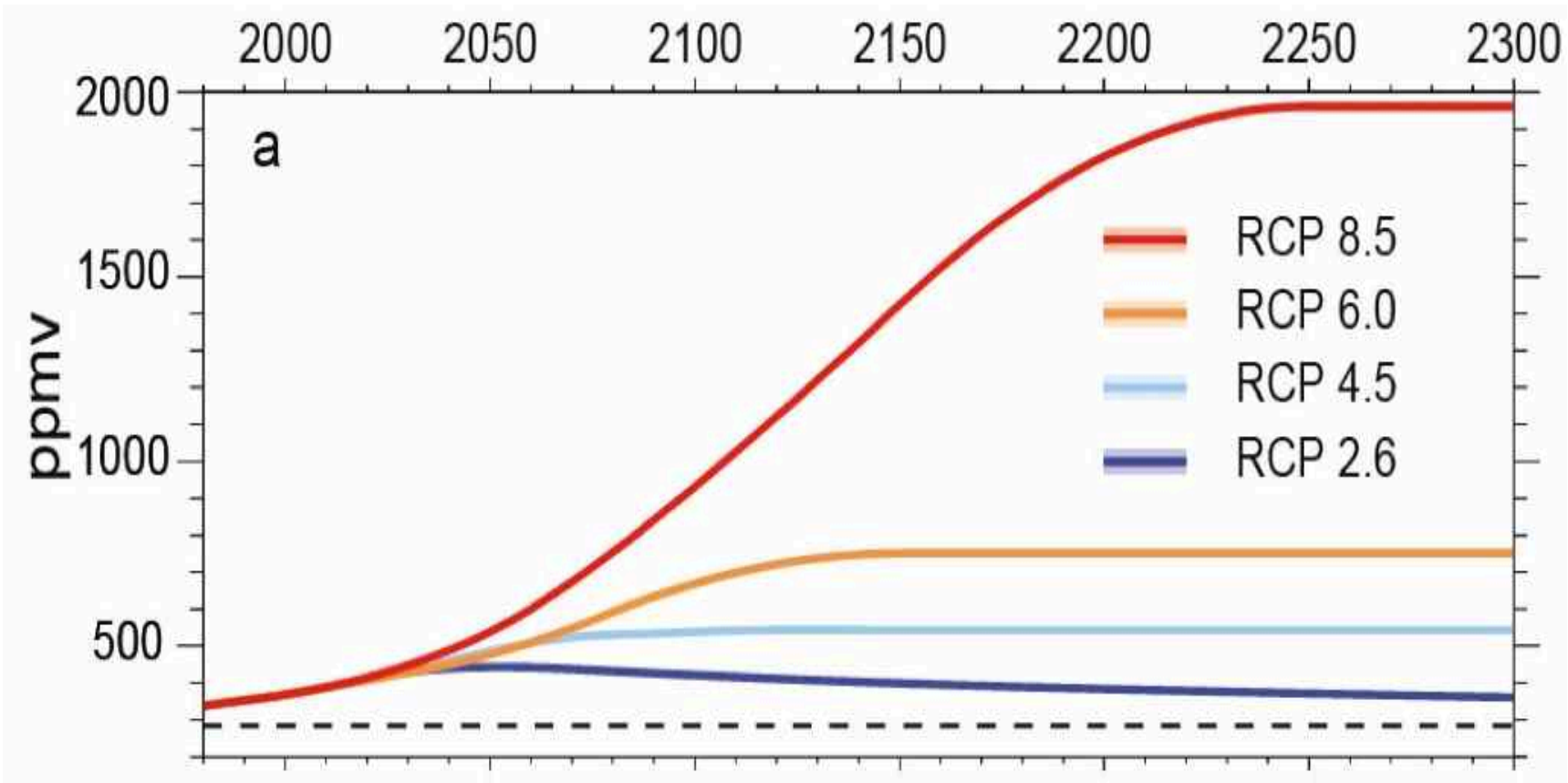
AR5 WGIII SPM

Since 1950, extreme hot days and heavy precipitation have become more common



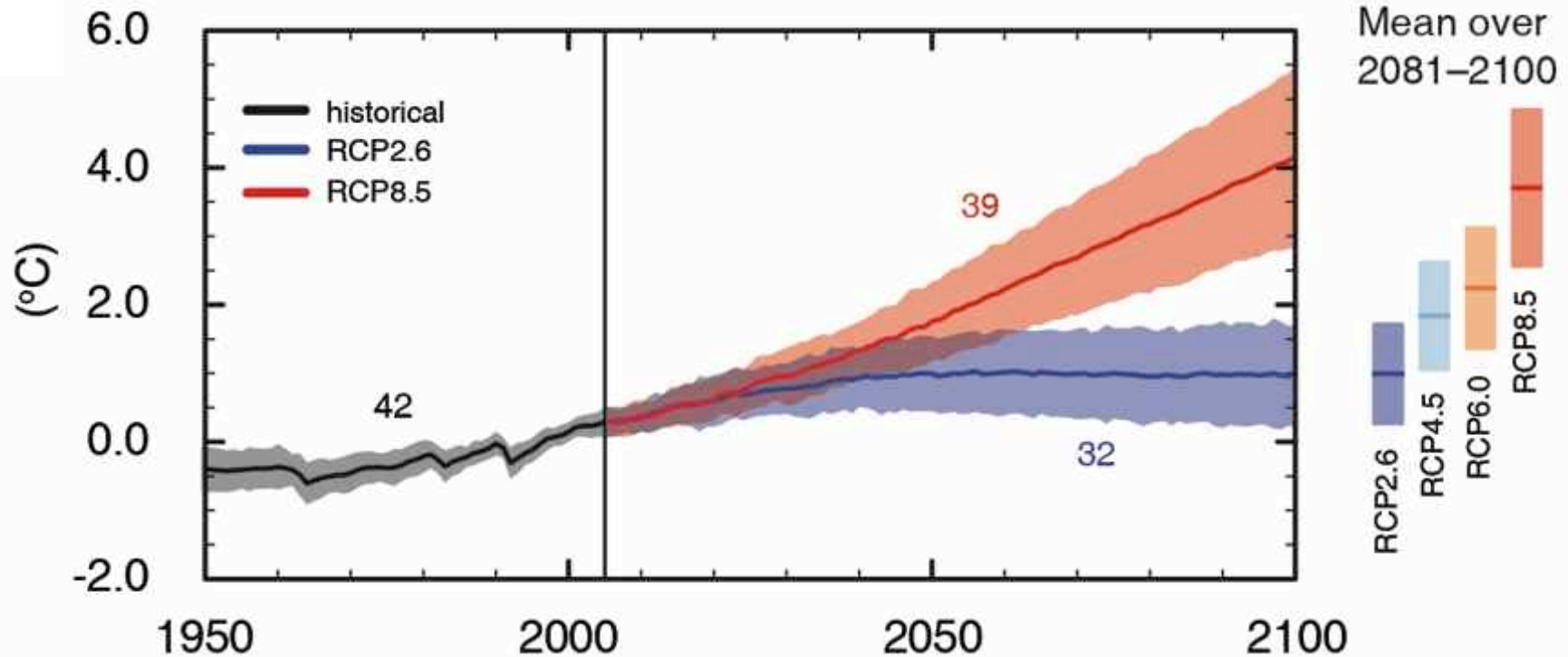
There is evidence that anthropogenic influences, including increasing atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations, have changed these extremes

RCP Scenarios: Atmospheric CO₂ concentration



Three stabilisation scenarios: RCP 2.6 to 6
One Business-as-usual scenario: RCP 8.5

Global average surface temperature change



(IPCC 2013, Fig. SPM.7a)

Only the lowest (RCP2.6) scenario maintains the global surface temperature increase above the pre-industrial level to less than 2°C with at least 66% probability

18-20000 years ago (Last Glacial Maximum)

With permission from Dr. S. Joussaume, in « Climat d'hier à demain », CNRS éditions.

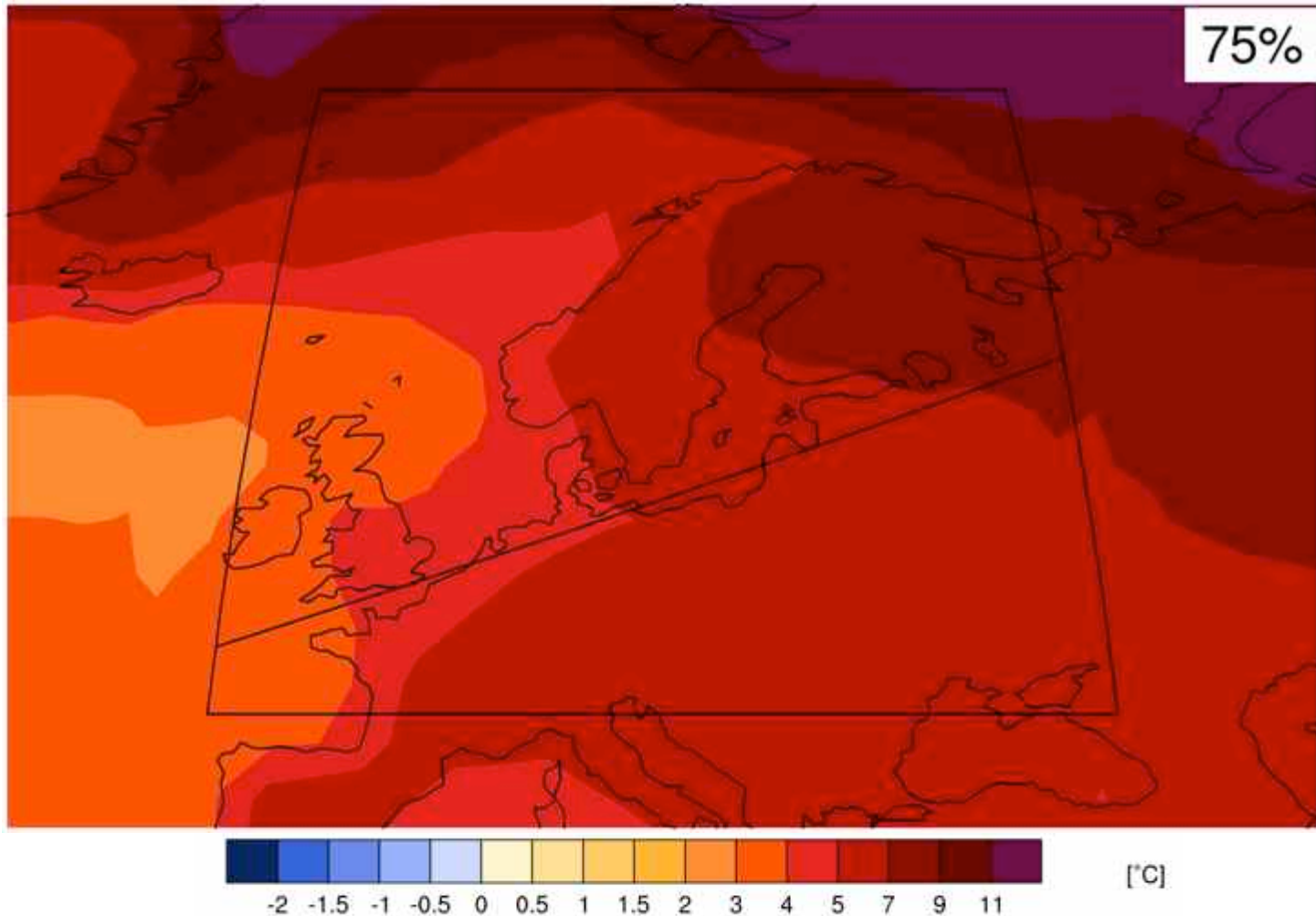


Today, with +4-5°C globally

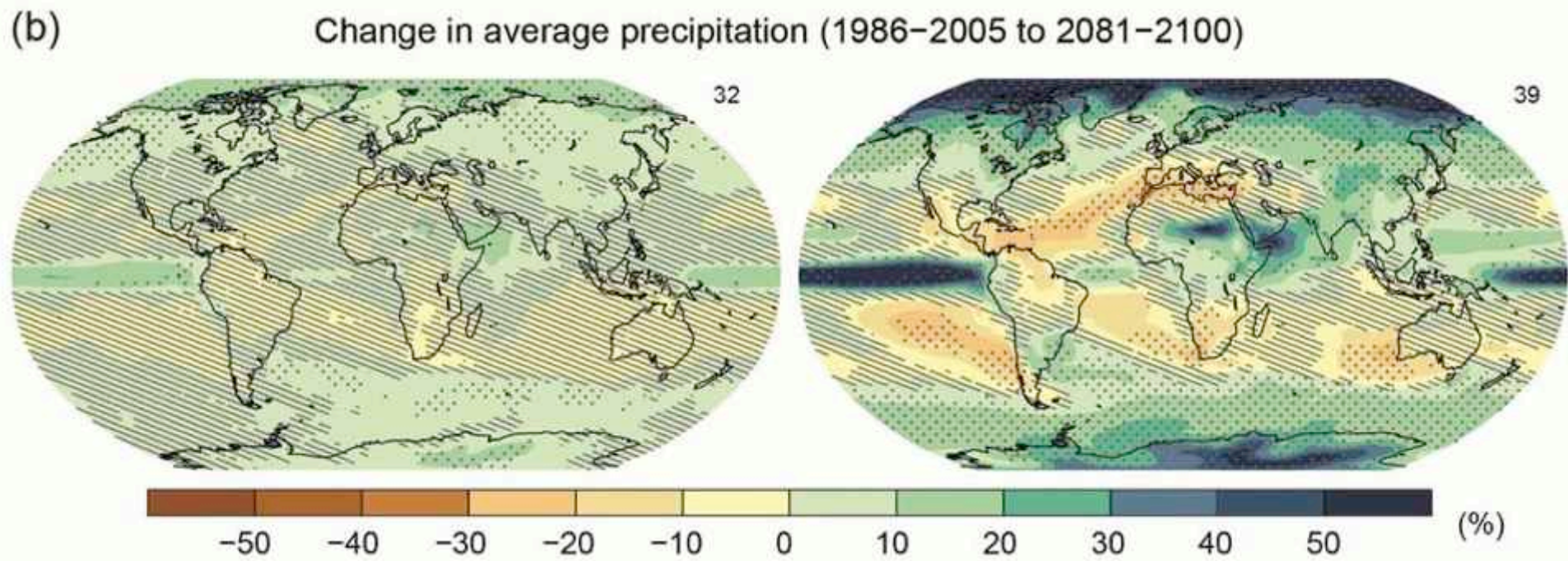
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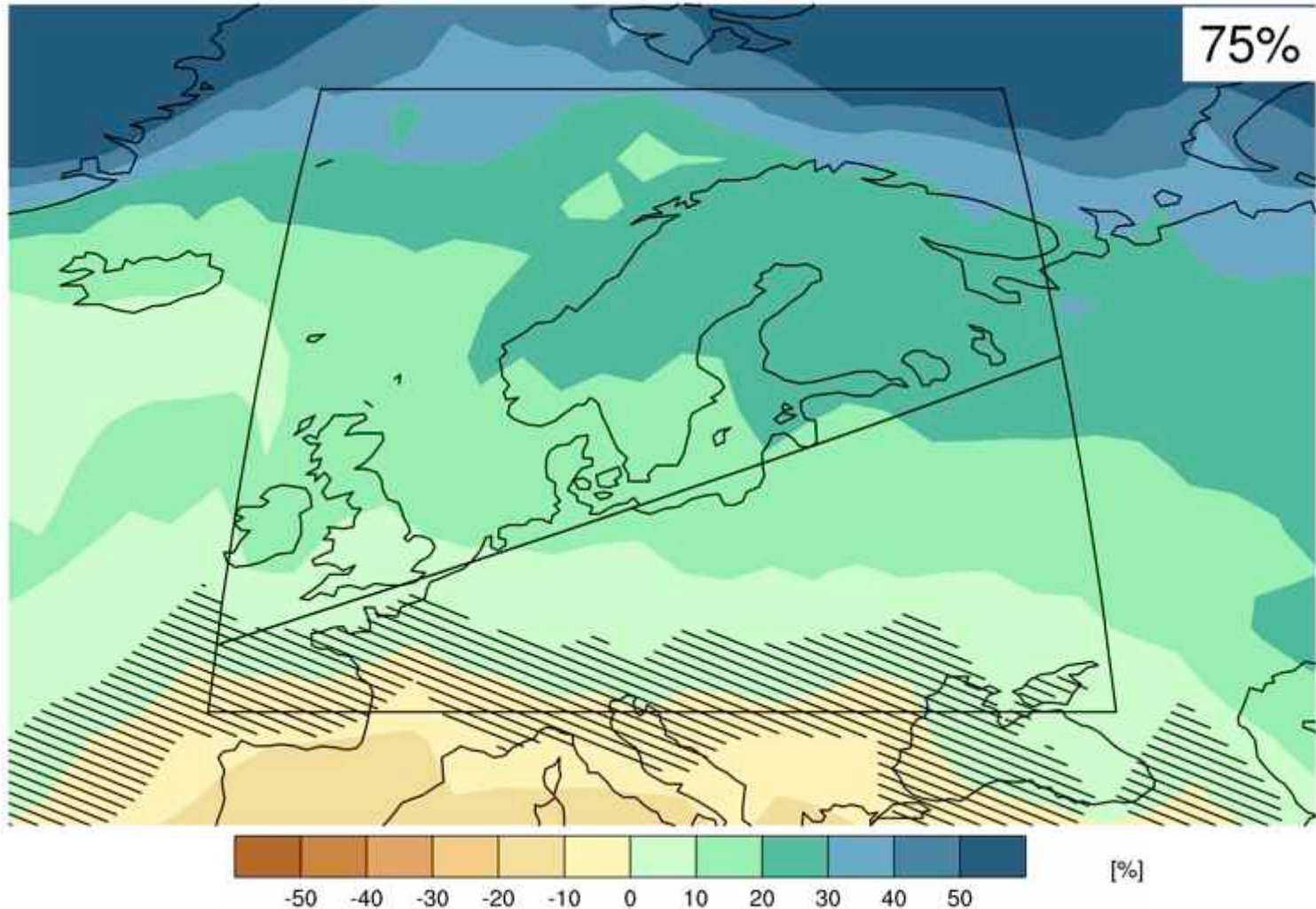
North Europe - Map of temperature changes: 2081–2100 with respect to 1986–2005 in the RCP8.5 scenario (annual)

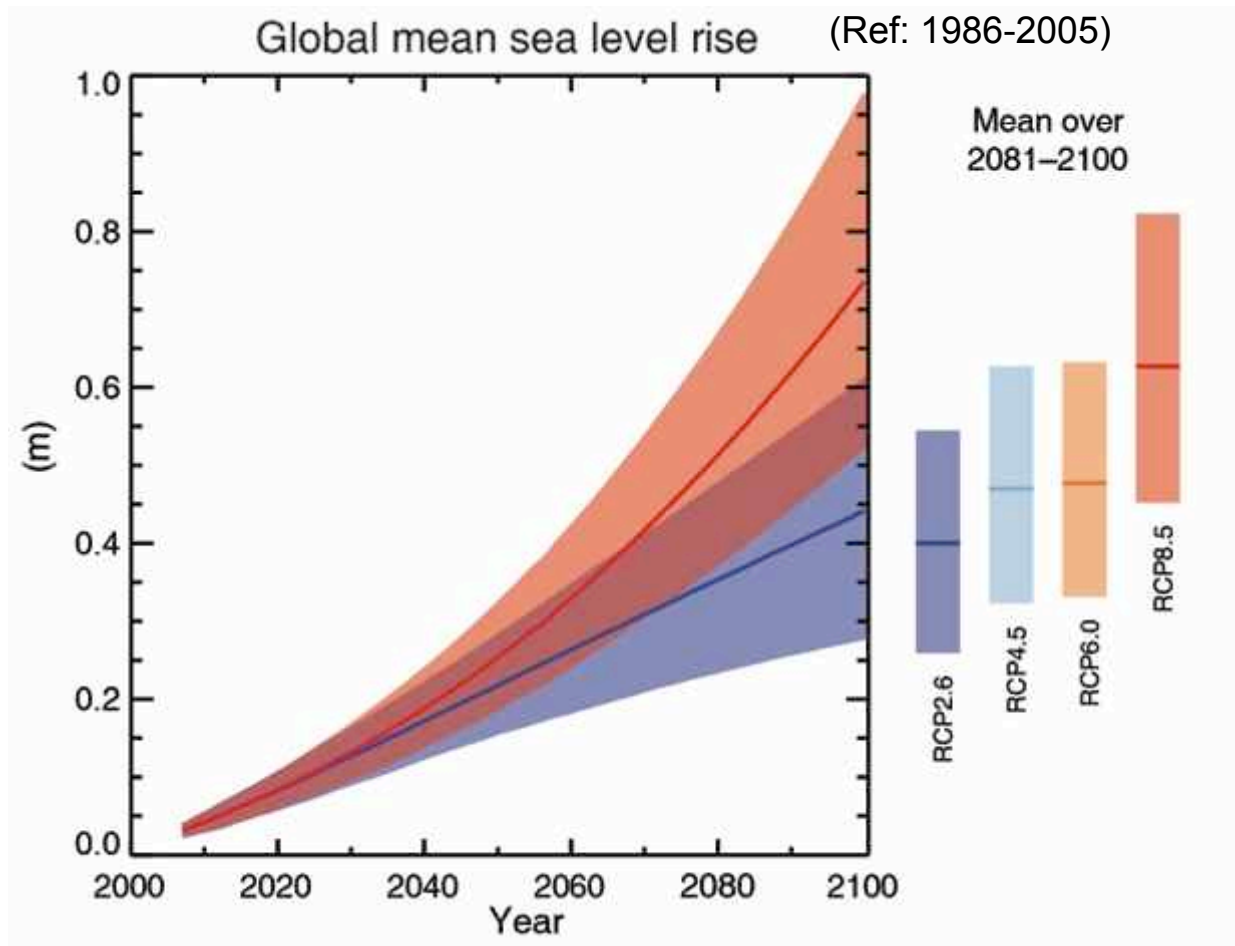


Projections de l'évolution du total des pluies



North Europe - Map of precipitation changes in 2081–2100 with respect to 1986–2005 in the RCP8.5 scenario (annual)





(IPCC 2013, Fig. SPM.9)

Le niveau moyen des mers continuera à s'élever au cours du XXI^e siècle

**With 1 metre sea-level rise: 63000 ha below sea-level in Belgium (likely in 22nd century, not impossible in 21st century)
(NB: flooded area depends on protection)**



Source: N. Dendoncker (Dépt de Géographie, UCL), J.P. van Ypersele et P. Marbaix (Dépt de Physique, UCL)

**With 8 metre sea-level rise: 3700 km² below sea-level in Belgium
(very possible in year 3000)
(NB: flooded area depends on protection)**



Source: N. Dendoncker (Dépt de Géographie, UCL), J.P. van Ypersele et P. Marbaix (Dépt de Physique, UCL)

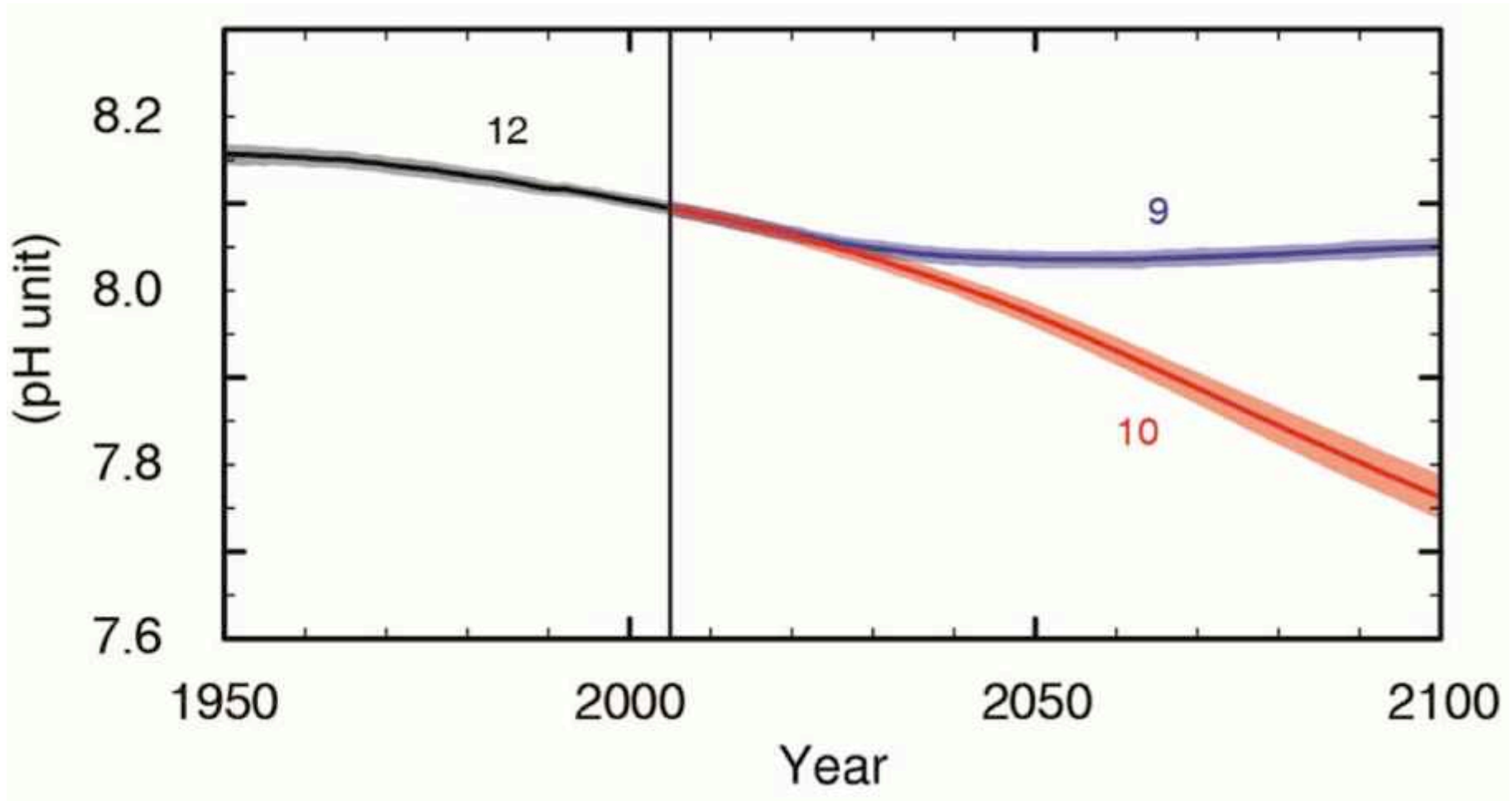
Effets sur le Delta du Nil, où vivent plus de 10 millions de personnes à moins d'1 m d'altitude



(Time 2001)

Global ocean surface pH (projections)

Ocean Acidification, for RCP 8.5 (orange) & RCP2.6 (blue)



Impacts are already underway

- **Tropics to the poles**
- **On all continents and in the ocean**
- **Affecting rich and poor countries (but the poor are more vulnerable everywhere)**



AR5 WGII SPM

Potential Impacts of Climate Change



Food and water shortages



Increased displacement of people



Increased poverty



Coastal flooding

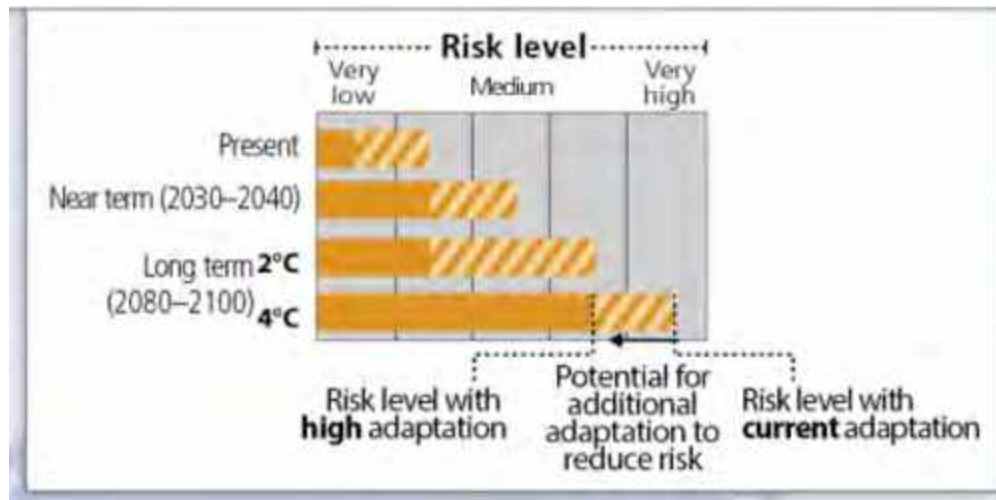
AR5 WGII SPM



ADAPTATION IS ALREADY OCCURRING

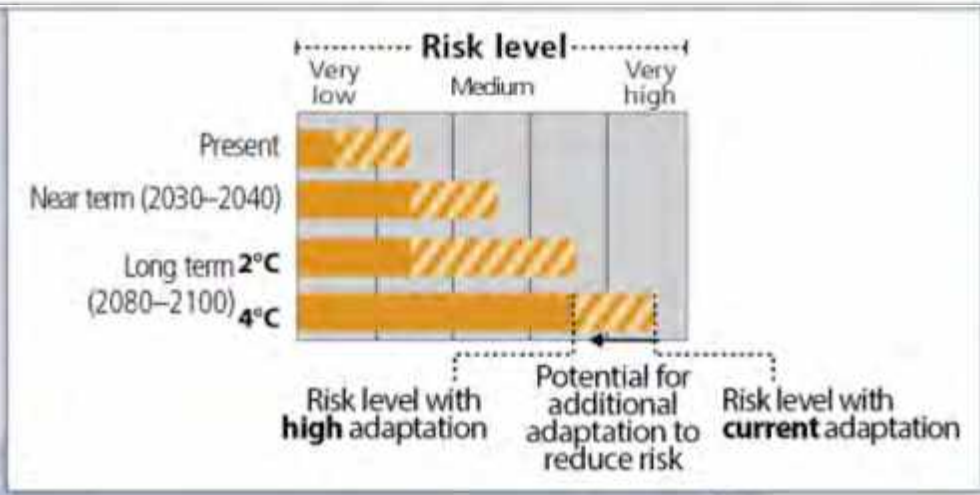
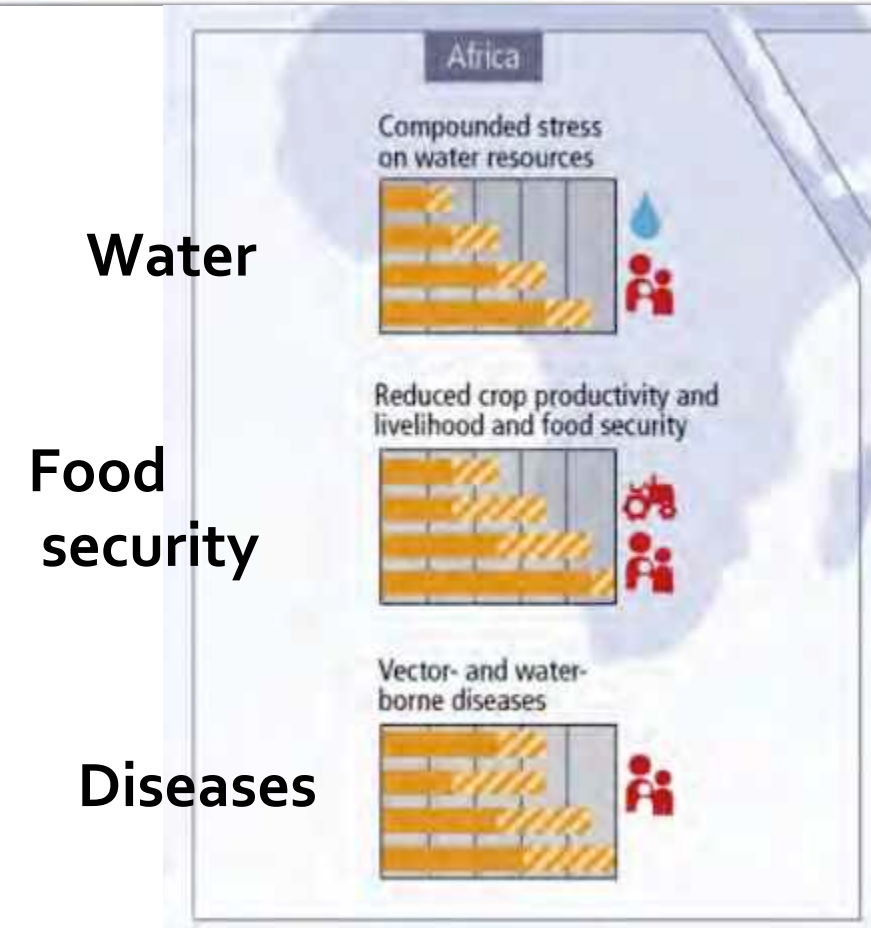
Regional key risks and potential for risk reduction through adaptation

Representative key risks for each region for



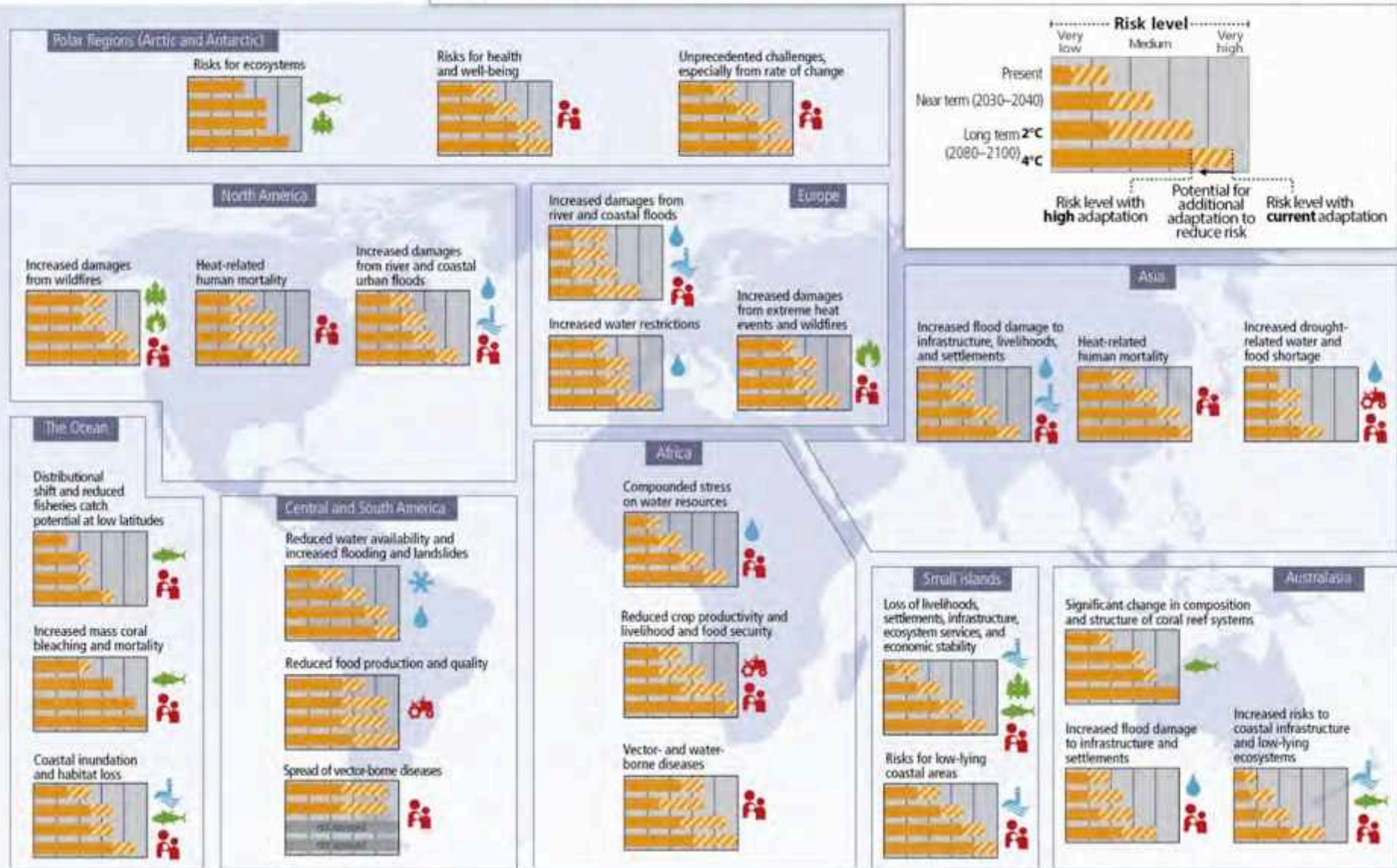
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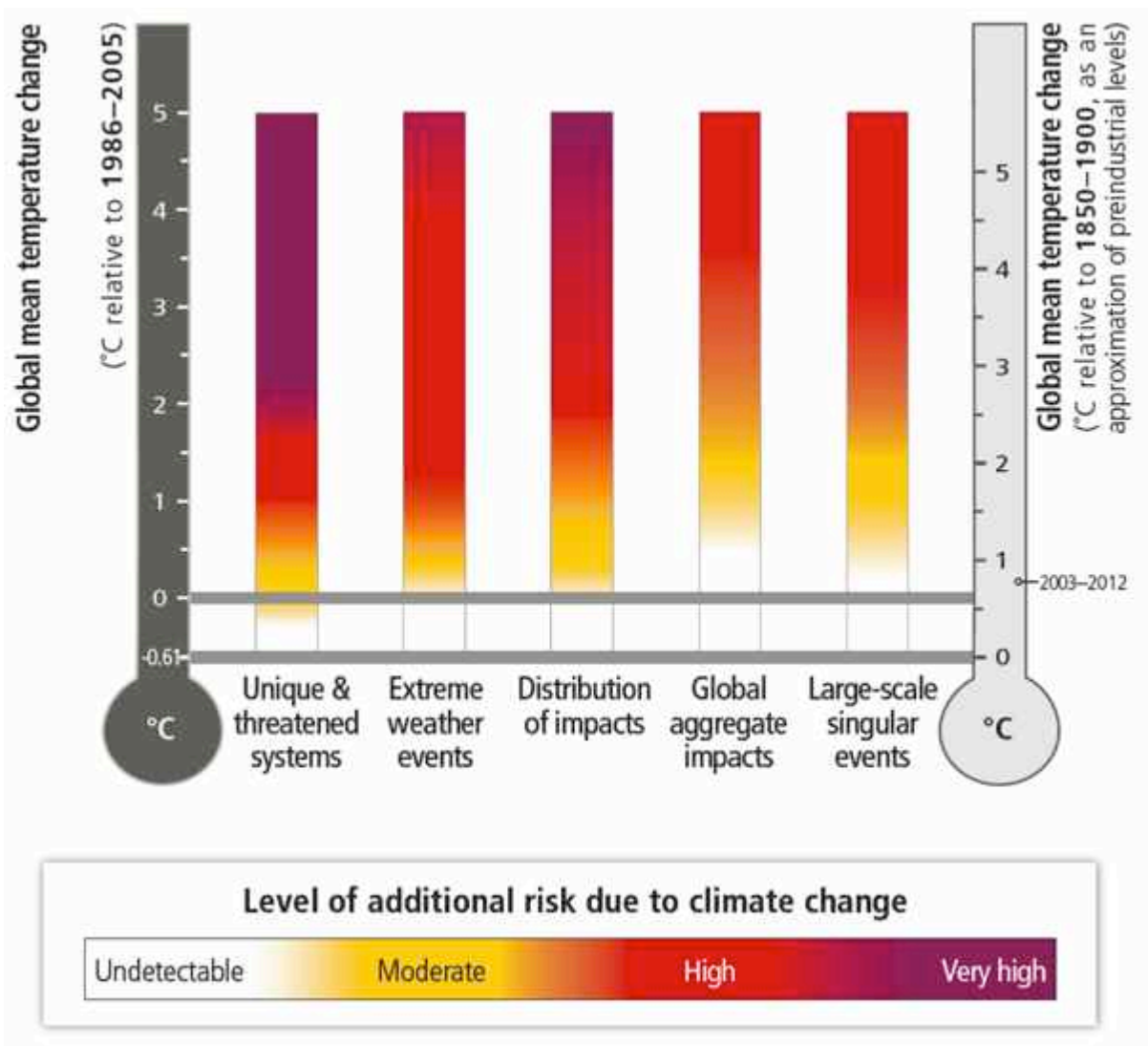
Regional key risks and potential for risk reduction

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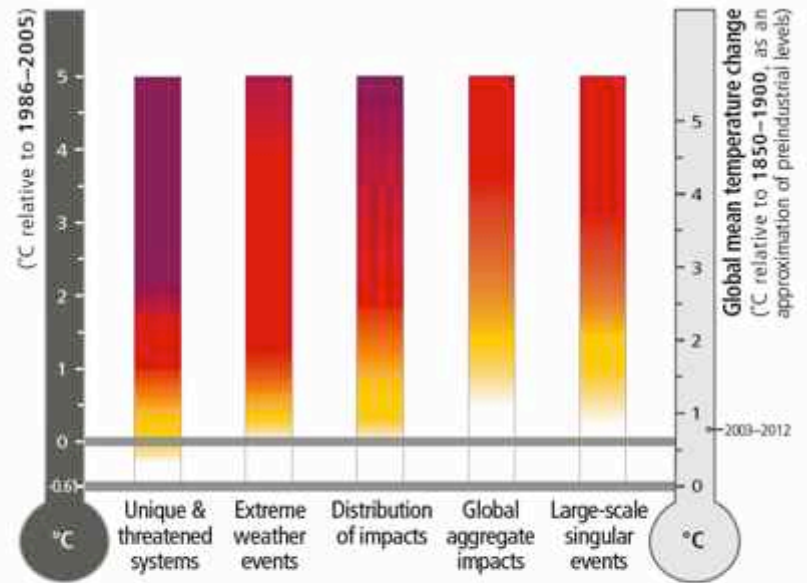
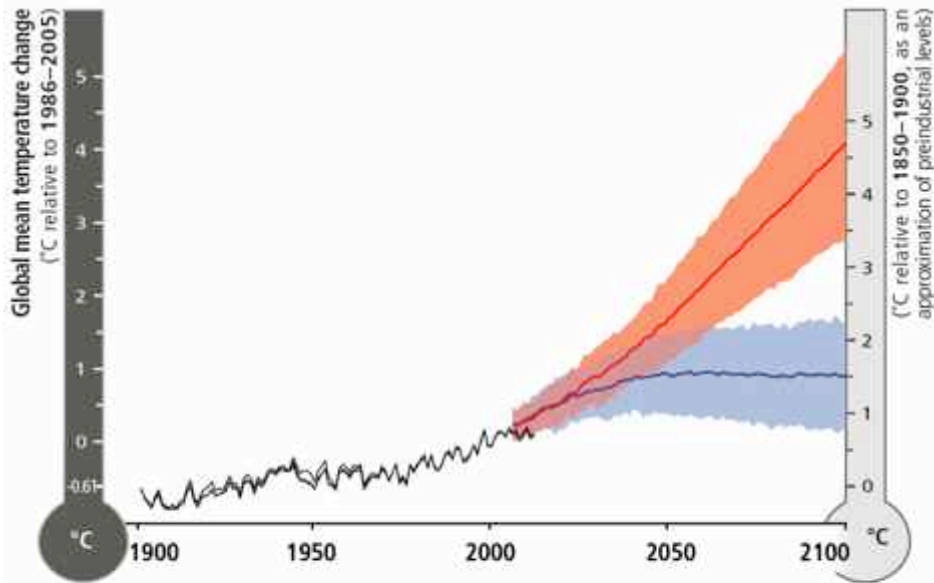


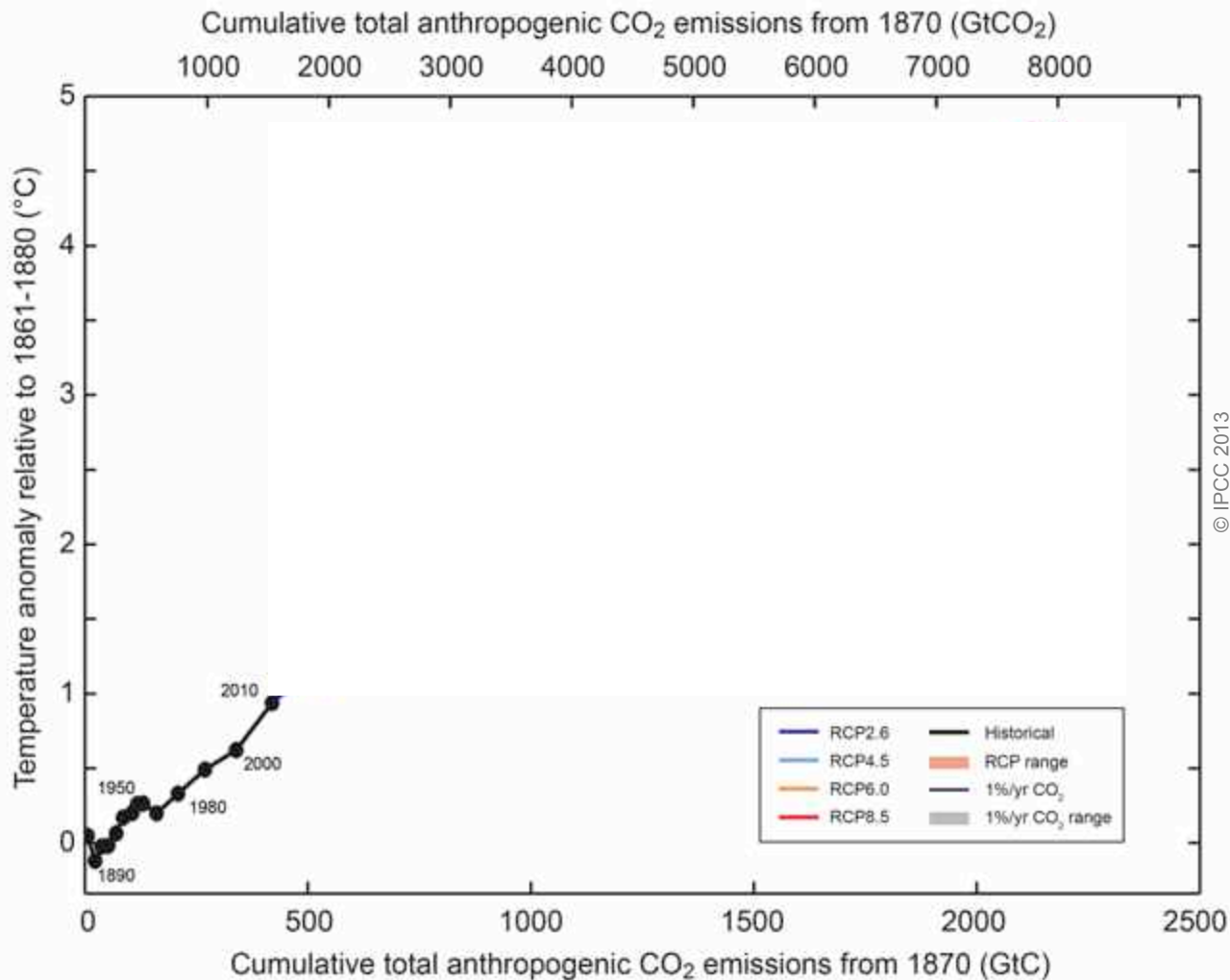


RISKS OF
CLIMATE CHANGE
INCREASE
WITH CONTINUED
HIGH EMISSIONS



AR5, WGII, Box SPM.1 Figure 1





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Fig. SPM.10

Cumulative emissions of CO₂ largely determine global mean surface warming by the late 21st century and beyond.

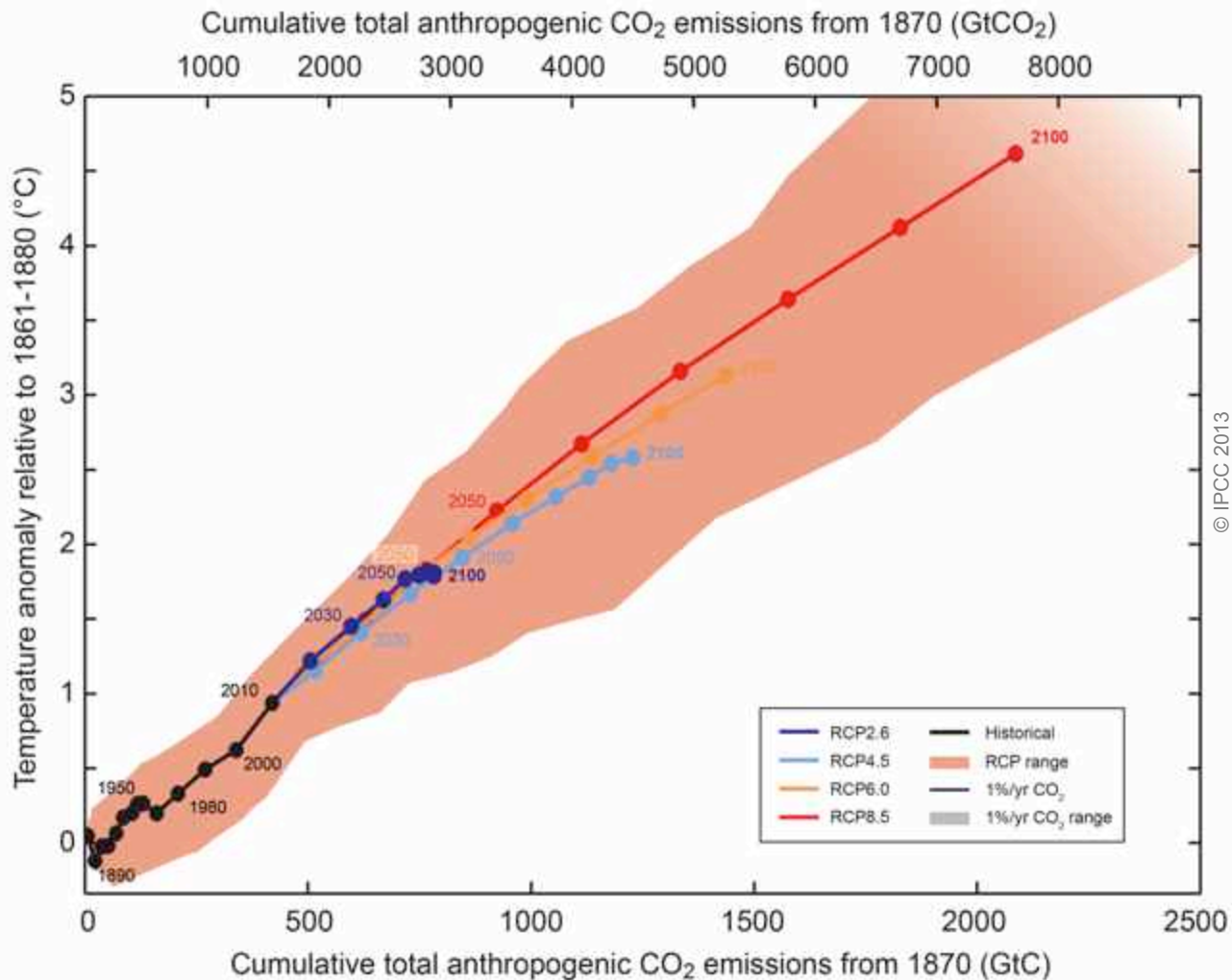
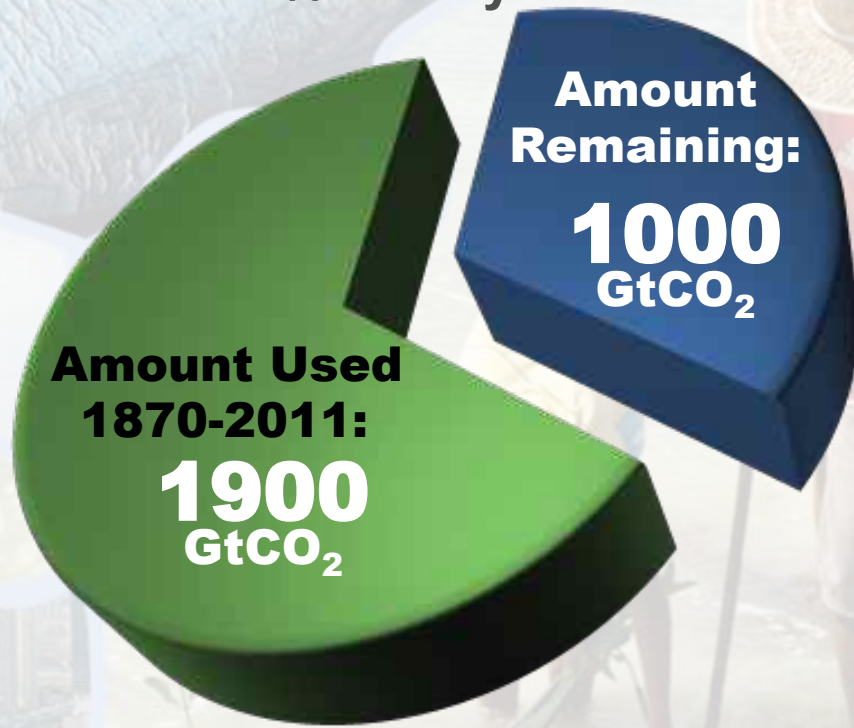


Fig. SPM.10

Limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.

The window for action is rapidly closing

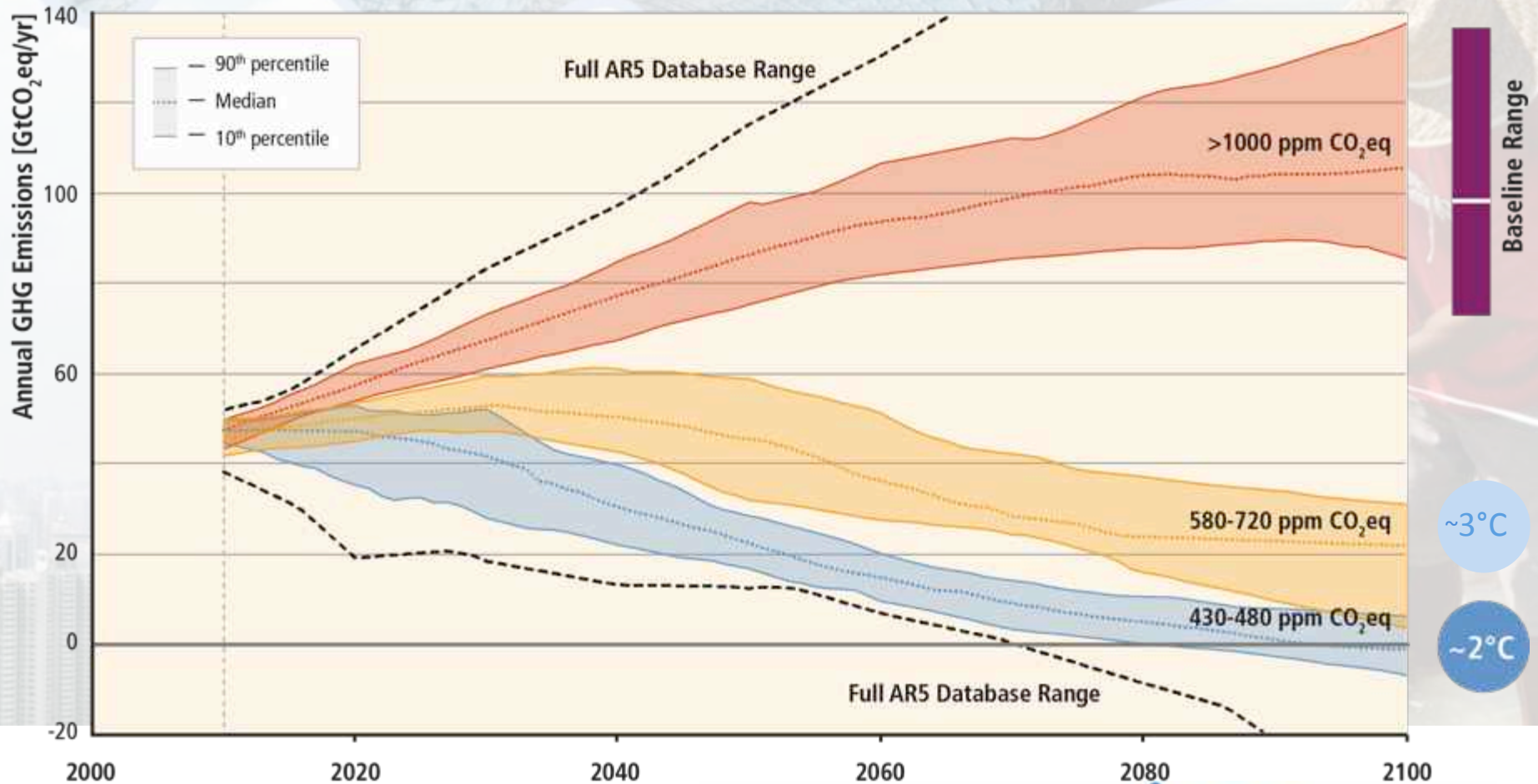
65% of the carbon budget compatible with a 2°C goal is already used
NB: this is with a probability greater than 66% to stay below 2°C



NB: Emissions in 2011: 38 GtCO₂/yr

AR5 WGI SPM

Stabilization of atmospheric concentrations requires moving away from the baseline – regardless of the mitigation goal.



Based on Figure 6.7

Limiting Temperature Increase to 2°C



Measures exist to achieve the substantial emissions reductions required to limit likely warming to 2°C



A combination of adaptation and substantial, sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions can limit climate change risks



Implementing reductions in greenhouse gas emissions poses substantial technological, economic, social, and institutional challenges



But delaying mitigation will substantially increase the challenges associated with limiting warming to 2°C

AR5 WGI SPM, AR5 WGII SPM, AR5 WGIII SPM

Can temperature rise still be kept below 1.5 or 2°C (over the 21st century) compared to pre-industrial ?

- **Many scenario studies confirm that it is technically and economically feasible to keep the warming below 2°C, with more than 66% probability (“likely chance”).** This would imply limiting atmospheric concentrations to 450 ppm CO₂-eq by 2100.
- **Such scenarios for an above 66% chance of staying below 2°C imply reducing by 40 to 70% global GHG emissions compared to 2010 by mid-century, and reach zero or negative emissions by 2100.**

Can temperature rise still be kept below 1.5 or 2°C (over the 21st century) compared to pre-industrial ?

- **These scenarios are characterized by rapid improvements of energy efficiency and a near quadrupling of the share of low-carbon energy supply (renewables, nuclear, fossil and bioenergy with CCS), so that it reaches 60% by 2050.**
- **Keeping global temperature increase below 1.5°C would require even lower atmospheric concentrations (<430 ppm CO₂eq) to have a little more than 50% chance.** There are not many scenario studies available that can deliver such results, **requiring even faster reductions** in the medium term, **indicating how difficult this is.**

Mitigation Measures



More efficient use of energy



Greater use of low-carbon and no-carbon energy

- Many of these technologies exist today
- But worldwide investment in **research** in support of GHG mitigation is small...



Improved carbon sinks

- **Reduced deforestation** and improved forest management and planting of new forests
- **Bio-energy with carbon capture and storage**

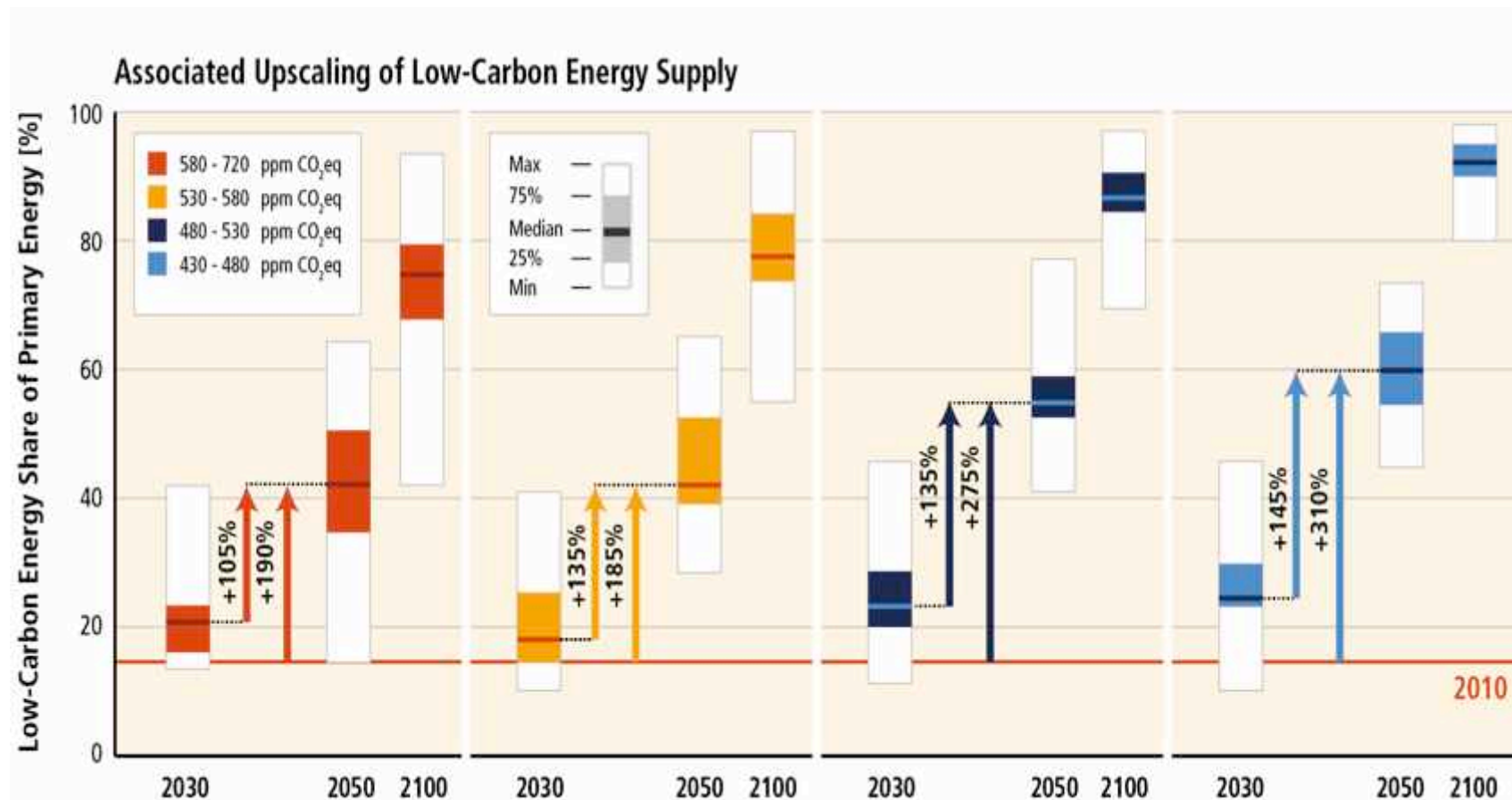


Lifestyle and behavioural changes

AR5 WGIII SPM

- **Mitigation requires major technological and institutional changes including the upscaling of low- and zero carbon energy (quadrupling from 2010 to 2050 for the scenario limiting warming below 2°C)**

Mitigation requires major technological and institutional changes including the upscaling of low- and zero carbon energy

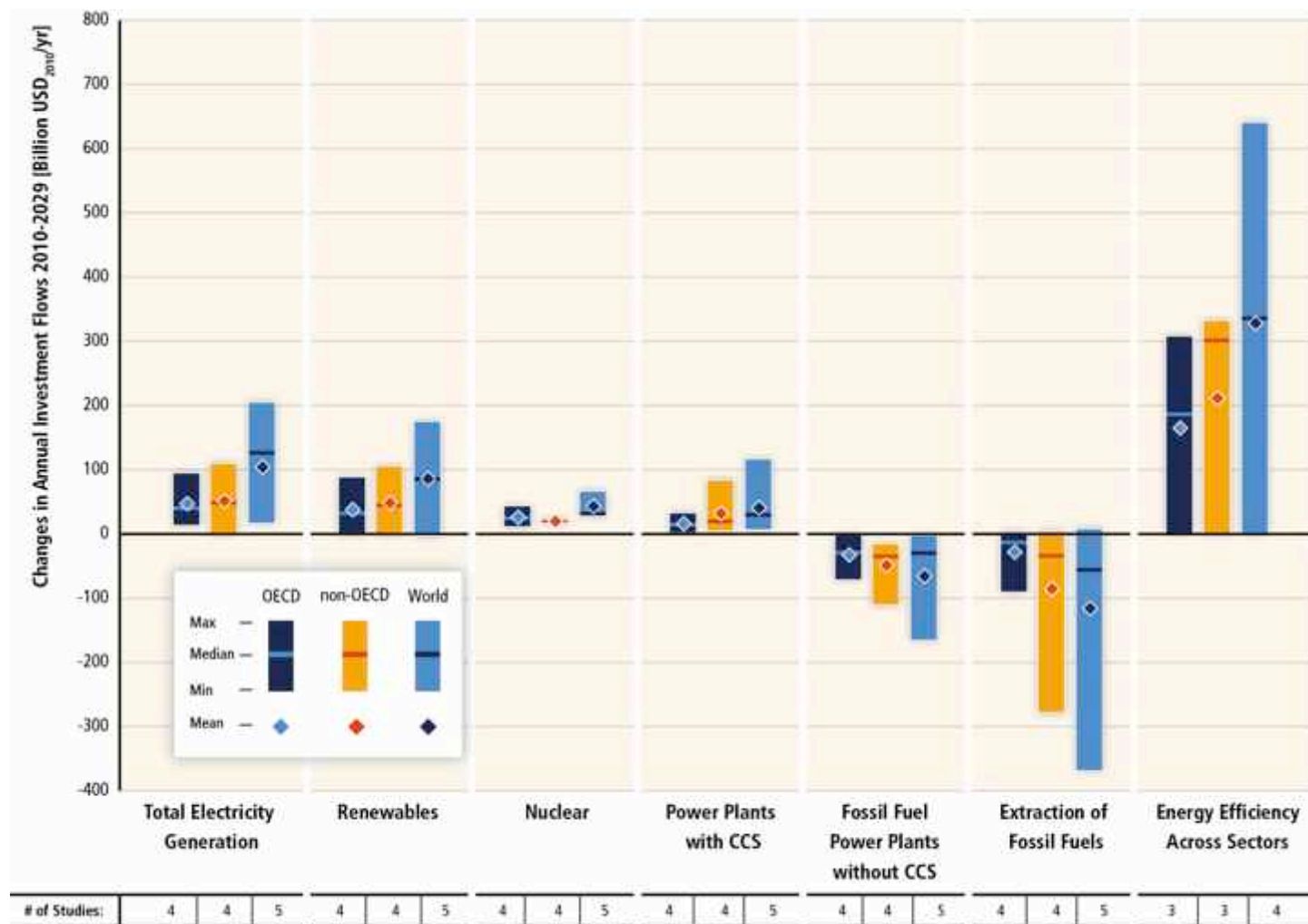


- **Substantial reductions in emissions would require large changes in investment patterns e.g., from 2010 to 2029, in billions US dollars/year:**

(mean numbers rounded, IPCC AR5 WGIII Fig SPM 9)

- **energy efficiency: +330**
- **renewables: + 90**
- **power plants w/ CCS: + 40**
- **nuclear: + 40**
- **power plants w/o CCS: - 60**
- **fossil fuel extraction: - 120**

Substantial reductions in emissions would require large changes in investment patterns.



Since AR4, there has been an increased focus on policies designed to integrate multiple objectives, increase co-benefits and reduce adverse side-effects.

- **Sector-specific policies** have been more widely used than economy-wide policies.
- **Regulatory approaches and information** measures are widely used, and are often environmentally effective.
- Since AR4, **cap and trade** systems for GHGs have been established in a number of countries and regions.
- In some countries, **tax-based policies** specifically aimed at reducing GHG emissions—alongside technology and other policies—have helped to weaken the link between GHG emissions and GDP
- The **reduction of subsidies** for GHG-related activities in various sectors can achieve emission reductions, depending on the social and economic context.

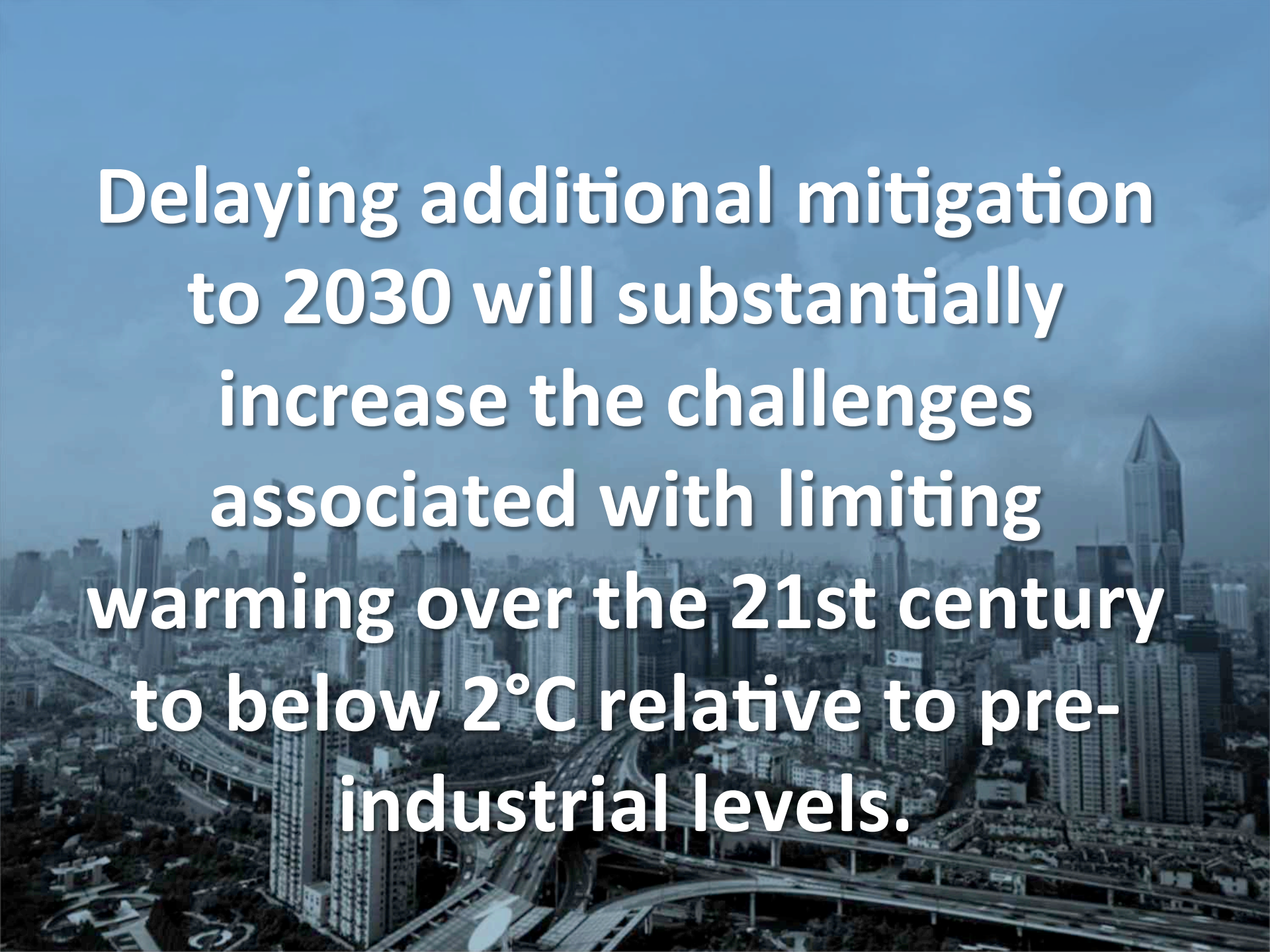
Effective mitigation will not be achieved if individual agents advance their own interests independently.

- Existing and proposed **international climate change cooperation** arrangements vary in their focus and degree of centralization and coordination.
- Issues of **equity, justice, and fairness** arise with respect to mitigation and adaptation.
- Climate policy may be informed by a consideration of a diverse array of risks and uncertainties, some of which are difficult to measure, notably events that are of low probability but which would have a significant impact if they occur.

Ambitious Mitigation Is Affordable

- Economic growth reduced by ~ 0.06%
(BAU growth 1.6 - 3%/year)
- This translates into delayed and not forgone growth
- Estimated cost does not account for the benefits of reduced climate change
- Unmitigated climate change would create increasing risks to economic growth and efforts to eradicate poverty

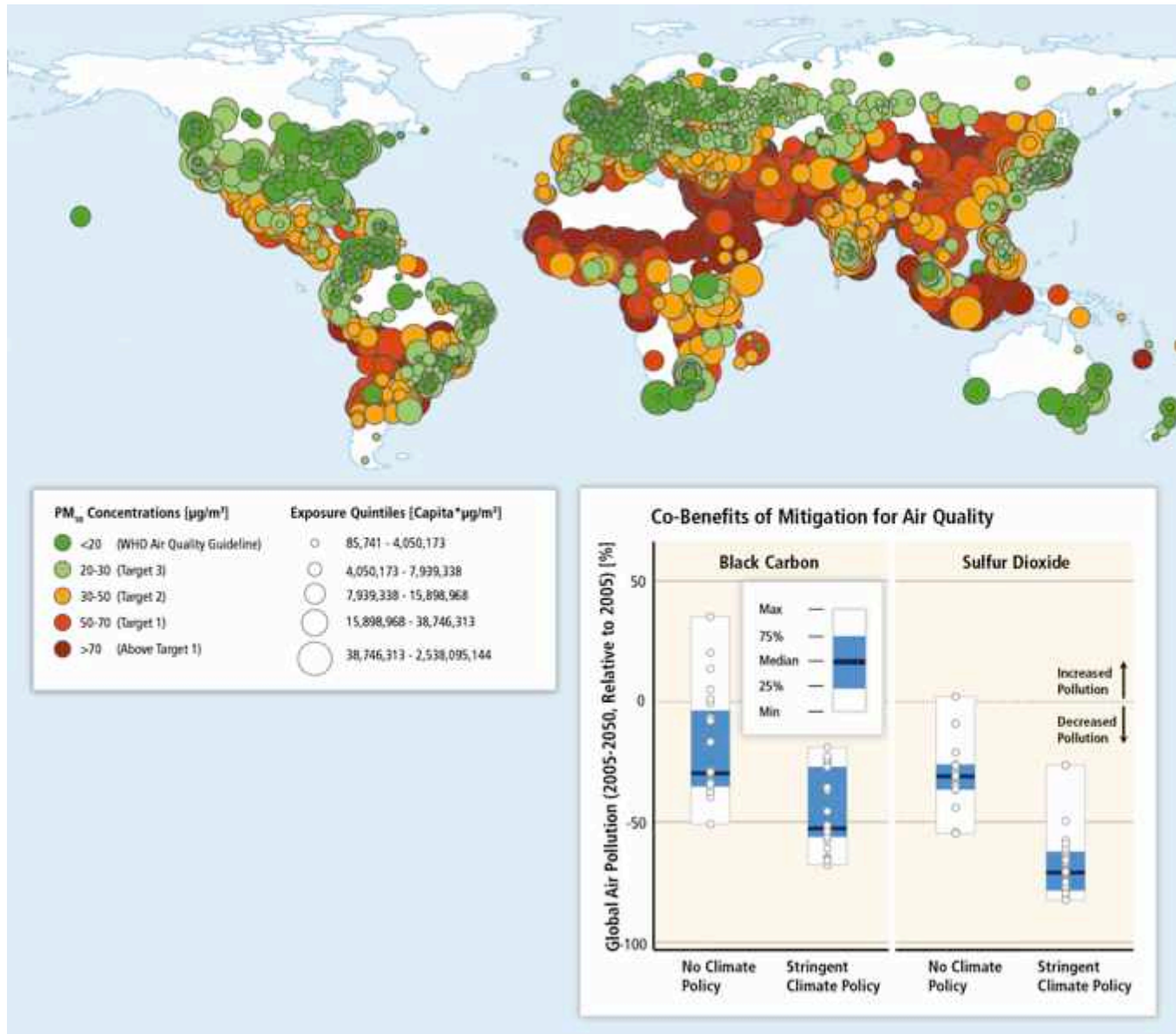
AR5 WGI SPM, AR5 WGII SPM

An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Hong Kong, featuring a complex highway interchange in the foreground and numerous high-rise buildings in the background. The image is overlaid with white text.

**Delaying additional mitigation
to 2030 will substantially
increase the challenges
associated with limiting
warming over the 21st century
to below 2°C relative to pre-
industrial levels.**

NB: Ambition *before* 2020 is essential as well (lock-in & entrainment effects)

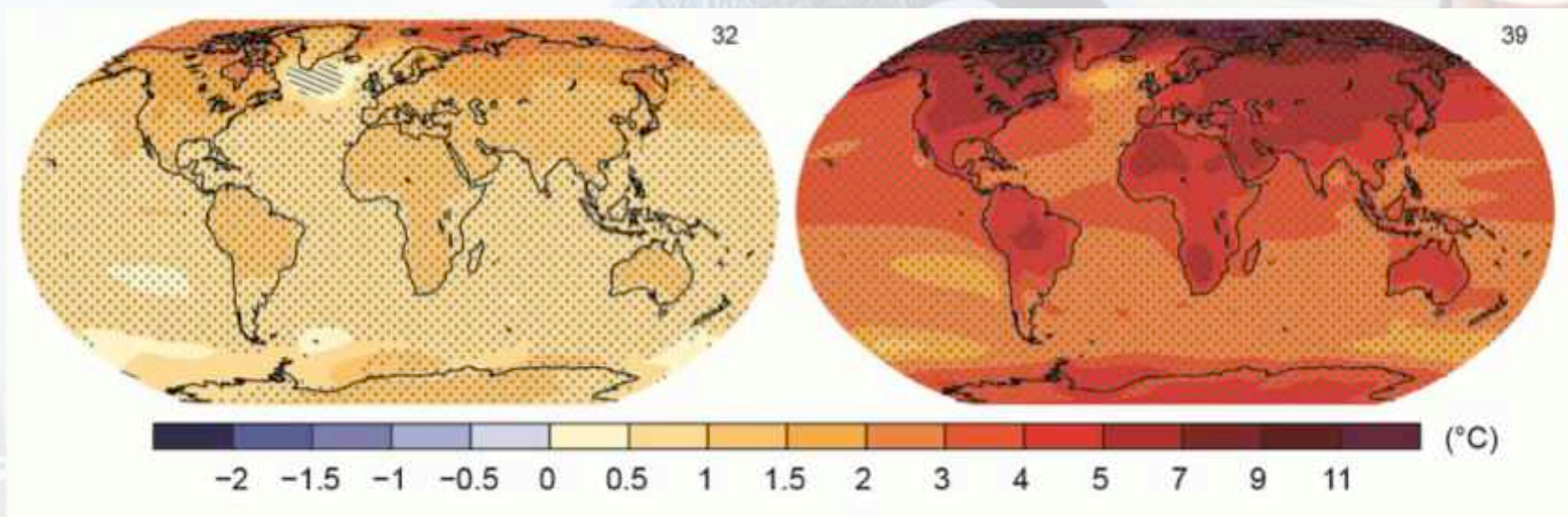
Mitigation can result in large co-benefits for human health and other societal goals.



The Choices Humanity Makes Will Create Different Outcomes (and affect prospects for effective adaptation)

With substantial mitigation

Without additional mitigation



Change in average surface temperature (1986–2005 to 2081–2100)

AR5 WGI SPM

Useful links:

- www.ipcc.ch : IPCC (reports and videos)
- www.climate.be/vanyp : my slides and other documents, including my candidacy
- www.skepticalscience.com: excellent responses to contrarians arguments
- www.congrestransitiondurable.org (Congrès DD 20/5 (ULB) et 21-22/5 (UCL))
- **On Twitter: @JPvanYpersele**
and @IPCC_CH

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