

Comments on SPM, final draft, dated 27 October 2006

I have not been engaged in the process of compiling or reviewing the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC. After having heard rumors, I got a chance to inspect the draft version, and based on that reading I want to log the following comments:

- a) page 6, line 28. The present language suggests, but falls short of voicing concrete claims as such, the existence of a systematic increase, which is documented in the data from recent decades covered by satellite. Data of landfalling US hurricanes, which is the only somewhat homogeneous data set extending over more than the multi-decadal time scale of hurricane variability, is inconsistent with the notion of a systematic tendency towards more hurricanes. Interestingly, if there would really be a systematic increase of Atlantic ocean hurricanes, then fewer and fewer hurricanes made landfall in the 20th century, as documented by Pielke jr. Also, I understand that the Draft is inconsistent with the recent WMO statement on the issue.
- b) The Institute for Coastal Research of the GKSS Research Center, of which I am a director, is engaged in the analysis of past and recent storminess (and related issues, waves and storm surges) in N Europe and the NE Atlantic. We are also deriving RCM-based scenarios of these features for the 21st century. The results are published in journals such as BAMS, GRL, J Climate and others. We had, as far as I know, no contact to any of the Chapters listed, and therefore we do not know the basis of the statement on storm tracks and winds on line 22/23 on page 9.

We know, however, very well that no documented long-term change of these features has taken place in N Europe and the NE Atlantic. In this areas, long term data and proxies are available (and documented in the peer-reviewed literature); they do not support the claim in the Draft. There was an intermittent change, from about 1960 to 1995, which was, however preceded by a multi-decadal downturn on activity until about 1960; in most areas the trends has reversed in the mid 1990. I would dare to say that we know that there is NO trend at this time, and that this statement is “very likely”.

It is, of course possible, that the statement is based on variations in other extra-tropical parts of the world; I have spoken with colleagues who work in the Pacific sector, but they would not be able to say where any such claims would come from. In any case, it would be needed to spell out what is meant here. In the present formulation the statement is either false or misleading.

Interestingly, no mentioning is done in the SPM on extra-tropical storminess apart of the 3 words in line 23/SPM-9. Nothing is in Table SPM-1.

- c) The reliance on Table SPM-1 on data “Typically post 1960” is misleading. Natural variability certainly extends over several decades. In case of hurricanes and extra-tropical storms in the NE Atlantic and N Europe, 40 years of data are insufficient. This has been amply documented in the past., not only but also in the statistics of clustering historical extreme events.

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