

GLOBAL WARMING AND GREENHOUSE GASES

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Abstract. *Global warming or Climate change refers to long-term fluctuations in temperature, precipitation, wind, and other elements of the Earth's climate system. Natural processes such as solar-irradiance variations, variations in the Earth's orbital parameters, and volcanic activity can produce variations in climate. The climate system can also be influenced by changes in the concentration of various gases in the atmosphere, which affect the Earth's absorption of radiation.*

Key words: *global warming, greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone, Kyoto protocol*

INTRODUCTION

The Earth naturally absorbs and reflects incoming solar radiation and emits longer wavelength terrestrial (thermal) radiation back into space. In average, the absorbed solar radiation is balanced by the outgoing terrestrial radiation emitted to space. A portion of this terrestrial radiation, though, is itself absorbed by gases in the atmosphere. The energy from this absorbed terrestrial radiation warms the Earth's surface and atmosphere, creating what is known as the "natural greenhouse effect." Without the natural heat-trapping properties of these atmospheric gases, the average surface temperature of the Earth would be about 33°C lower (Intra-governmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC 2001).

Under the UNFCCC, the definition of climate change is "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods." Given that definition, in its Second Assessment Report of the science of climate change, the IPCC concluded that:

"Human activities are changing the atmospheric concentrations and distributions of greenhouse gases and aerosols. These changes can produce a radiative forcing by changing either the reflection or absorption of solar radiation, or the emission and absorption of terrestrial radiation (IPCC 1996)."

Built on that conclusion, the more recent IPCC Third Assessment Report asserts that

"concentrations of atmospheric greenhouse gases and their radiative forcing have continued to increase as a result of human activities" (IPCC 2001). The IPCC went on to report that the global average surface temperature of the Earth has increased by between $0.6 \pm 0.2^\circ\text{C}$ over the 20th century.

GREENHOUSE GASES

Although the Earth's atmosphere consists mainly of oxygen and nitrogen, neither plays a significant role in enhancing the greenhouse effect because both are essentially transparent to terrestrial radiation. The greenhouse effect is primarily a function of the concentration of water vapor, carbon dioxide, and other trace gases in the atmosphere that absorb the terrestrial radiation leaving the surface of the Earth (IPCC 1996). Changes in the atmospheric concentrations of these greenhouse gases can alter the balance of energy transfers between the atmosphere, space, land, and the oceans. A gauge of these changes is called radiative forcing, which is a simple measure of changes in the energy available to the Earth-atmosphere system (IPCC 1996). Holding everything else constant, increases in greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere will produce positive radiative forcing (i.e., a net increase in the absorption of energy by the Earth).

Climate change can be driven by changes in the atmospheric concentrations of a number of radiatively active gases and aerosols. We have clear evidence that human activities have affected concentrations, distributions and life cycles of these gases (IPCC 1996).

Naturally occurring greenhouse gases include water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), nitrous oxide (N_2O), and ozone (O_3). Several classes of halogenated substances that contain fluorine, chlorine, or bromine are also greenhouse gases, but they are, for the most part, solely a product of industrial activities. Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) are halocarbons that contain chlorine, while halocarbons that contain bromine are referred to as bromofluorocarbons (i.e., halons). Because CFCs, HCFCs, and halons are stratospheric ozone depleting substances, they are covered under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The UNFCCC defers to this earlier international treaty; consequently these gases are not included in national greenhouse gas inventories. Some other fluorine containing halogenated substances – hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6) – do not deplete stratospheric ozone but are potent greenhouse gases. These latter substances are addressed by the UNFCCC and accounted for in national greenhouse gas inventories.

There are also several gases that, although they do not have a commonly agreed upon direct radiative forcing effect, do influence the global radiation budget. These tropospheric gases – referred to as ambient air pollutants – include carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), and tropospheric (ground level) ozone (O_3). Tropospheric ozone is formed by two precursor pollutants, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x), in the presence of ultraviolet light (sunlight).

Aerosols – extremely small particles or liquid droplets – often composed of sulfur compounds, carbonaceous combustion products, crystal materials and other human induced pollutants – can affect the absorptive characteristics of the atmosphere. However, the level of scientific understanding of aerosols is still very low (IPCC 2001).

Carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide are continuously emitted to and removed from the atmosphere by natural processes on Earth. Anthropogenic activities, however, can cause additional quantities of these and other greenhouse gases to be emitted or sequestered, thereby changing their global average atmospheric concentrations. Natural activities such as respiration by plants or animals and seasonal cycles of plant growth and decay are examples of processes that only cycle carbon or nitrogen between the atmosphere and organic biomass. Such processes – except when directly or indirectly perturbed out of equilibrium by anthropogenic activities – generally do not alter average atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations over decadal timeframes.

Climatic changes resulting from anthropogenic activities, however, could have positive or negative feedback effects on these natural systems. Atmospheric concentrations of these gases, along with their rates of growth and atmospheric lifetimes, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Global atmospheric concentration (ppm unless otherwise specified), rate of concentration change (ppb/year) and atmospheric lifetime (years) of selected greenhouse gases

	CO ₂	CH ₄	N ₂ O	SF ₆ (ppt)	CF ₄ (ppt)
Pre-industrial concentration	278	0.700	0.270	0	40
Atmospheric concentration 1998	365	1.745	0.314	4.3	80
Rate of concentration change (90-99)	1.5	0.007	0.0008	0.24	1.0
Atmospheric lifetime	50-200	12	114	3,200	>50,000

Water Vapor (H₂O). Overall, the most abundant and dominant greenhouse gas in the atmosphere is water vapor. Water vapor is neither long-lived nor well mixed in the atmosphere, varying spatially from 0 to 2 percent (IPCC 1996). In addition, atmospheric water can exist in several physical states including gaseous, liquid, and solid. Human activities are not believed to directly affect the average global concentration of water vapor; however, the radiative forcing produced by the increased concentrations of other greenhouse gases may indirectly affect the hydrologic cycle. A warmer atmosphere has an increased water holding capacity; yet, increased concentrations of water vapor affects the formation of clouds, which can both absorb and reflect solar and terrestrial radiation. Aircraft contrails, which consist of water vapor and other aircraft emittants, are similar to clouds in their radiative forcing effects (IPCC 1999).

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂). In nature, carbon is cycled between various atmospheric, oceanic, land biotic, marine biotic, and mineral reservoirs. The largest fluxes occur between the atmosphere and terrestrial biota, and between the atmosphere and surface water of the oceans. In the atmosphere, carbon predominantly exists in its oxidized form as CO₂. Atmospheric carbon dioxide is part of this global carbon cycle, and therefore its fate is a complex function of geochemical and biological processes.

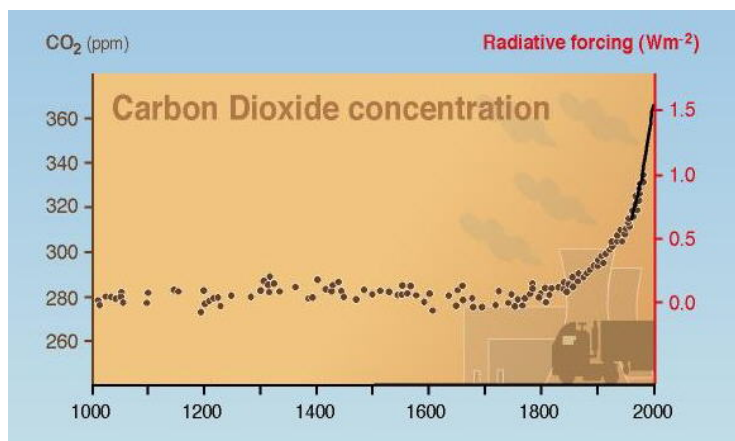


Fig. 1. Concentration change and radiative forcing of CO₂ in the last thousand years.

Carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere increased from approximately 280 parts per million by volume (ppmv) in pre-industrial times to 367 ppmv in 1999, a 31 percent increase (IPCC 2001). The IPCC notes that "[t]his concentration has not been exceeded during the past 420,000 years, and likely not during the past 20 million years." The rate of increase over the past century is unprecedented, at least during the past 20,000 years." The IPCC definitively states that "the present atmospheric CO₂ increase is caused by anthropogenic emissions of CO₂" (IPCC 2001). Forest clearing, other biomass burning, and some non-energy production processes (e.g., cement production) also emit notable quantities of carbon dioxide. In its second assessment, the IPCC also stated that "[t]he increased amount of carbon dioxide [in the atmosphere] is leading to climate change and will produce, on average, a global warming of the Earth's surface because of its enhanced greenhouse effect – although the magnitude and significance of the effects are not fully resolved" (IPCC 1996).

Methane (CH₄). Methane is primarily produced through anaerobic decomposition of organic matter in biological systems. Agricultural processes such as wetland rice cultivation, enteric fermentation in animals, and the decomposition of animal wastes emit CH₄, as does the decomposition of municipal solid wastes. Methane is also emitted during the production and distribution of natural gas and petroleum, and is released as a by-product of coal mining and incomplete fossil fuel combustion. Atmospheric concentrations of methane have increased by about 150 percent since pre-industrial times, although the rate of increase has been declining. The IPCC has estimated that slightly more than half of the current CH₄ flux to the atmosphere is anthropogenic, from human activities such as agriculture, fossil fuel use and waste disposal (IPCC 2001).

Methane is removed from the atmosphere by reacting with the hydroxyl radical (OH) and is ultimately converted to CO₂. Minor removal processes also include reaction with Cl in the marine boundary layer, a soil sink, and stratospheric reactions. Increasing emissions of methane reduce the concentration of OH, a feedback which may increase methane's atmospheric lifetime (IPCC 2001).

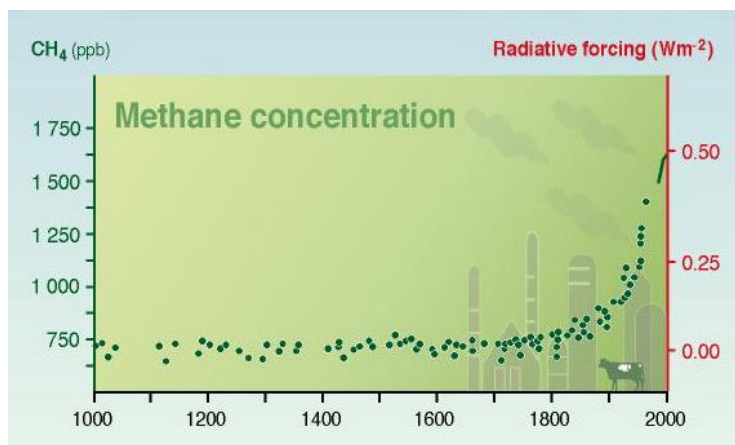


Fig. 2. Concentration change and radiative forcing of CH_4 in the last thousand years.

Nitrous Oxide (N_2O). Anthropogenic sources of N_2O emissions include agricultural soils, especially the use of synthetic and manure fertilizers; fossil fuel combustion, especially from mobile combustion; adipic (nylon) and nitric acid production; wastewater treatment and waste combustion; and biomass burning. The atmospheric concentration of nitrous oxide (N_2O) has increased by 16 percent since 1750, from a pre industrial value of about 270 ppb to 314 ppb in 1998, a concentration that has not been exceeded during the last thousand years. Nitrous oxide is primarily removed from the atmosphere by the photolytic action of sunlight in the stratosphere.

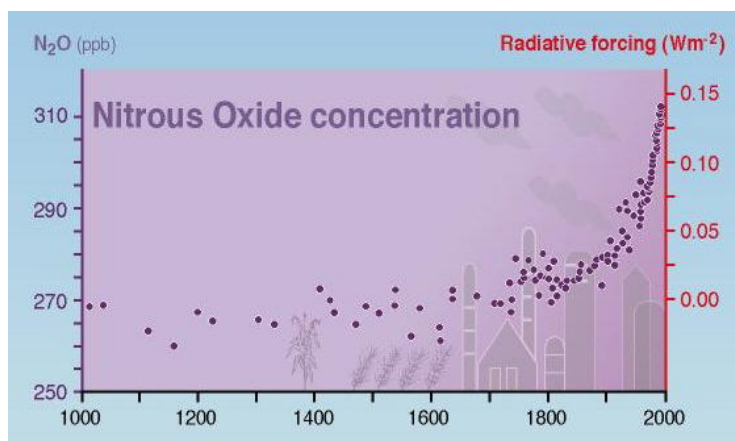


Fig. 3. Concentration change and radiative forcing of N_2O in the last thousand years.

Ozone (O_3). Ozone is present in both the upper stratosphere, where it shields the Earth from harmful levels of ultraviolet radiation, and at lower concentrations in the troposphere, where it is the main component of anthropogenic photochemical "smog." During the last two decades, emissions of anthropogenic chlorine and bromine-containing

halocarbons, such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), have depleted stratospheric ozone concentrations. This loss of ozone in the stratosphere has resulted in negative radiative forcing, representing an indirect effect of anthropogenic emissions of chlorine and bromine compounds (IPCC 1996). The depletion of stratospheric ozone and its radiative forcing was expected to reach a maximum in about 2000 before starting to recover, with detection of such recovery not expected to occur much before 2010 (IPCC 2001). The past increase in tropospheric ozone, which is also a greenhouse gas, is estimated to provide the third largest increase in direct radiative forcing since the pre-industrial era, behind CO_2 and CH_4 . Tropospheric ozone is produced from complex chemical reactions of volatile organic compounds mixing with nitrogen oxides (NO_x) in the presence of sunlight. Ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and particulate matter are included in the category referred to as "criteria pollutants" in the United States under the Clean Air Act and its subsequent amendments. The tropospheric concentrations of ozone and these other pollutants are short-lived and, therefore, spatially variable.

Halocarbons, Perfluorocarbons, and Sulfur Hexafluoride (SF_6). Halocarbons are, for the most part, man-made chemicals that have both direct and indirect radiative forcing effects. Halocarbons that contain chlorine – chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydro-chlorofluoro-carbons (HCFCs), methyl chloroform, and carbon tetrachloride – and bromine – halons, methyl bromide, and hydrobromofluorocarbons (HBFCs) – result in stratospheric ozone depletion and are therefore controlled under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Although CFCs and HCFCs include potent global warming gases, their net radiative forcing effect on the atmosphere is reduced because they cause stratospheric ozone depletion, which is itself an important greenhouse gas in addition to shielding the Earth from harmful levels of ultraviolet radiation. Under the Montreal Protocol, the United States phased out the production and importation of halons by 1994 and of CFCs by 1996. Under the Copenhagen Amendments to the Protocol, a cap was placed on the production and importation of HCFCs by non-Article 5 countries beginning in 1996, and then followed by a complete phase-out by the year 2030. The ozone depleting gases covered under the Montreal Protocol and its Amendments are not covered by the UNFCCC. Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6) are not ozone depleting substances, and therefore are not covered under the Montreal Protocol. They are, however, powerful greenhouse gases. HFCs – primarily used as replacements for ozone depleting substances but also emitted as a by-product of the HCFC-22 manufacturing process—currently have a small aggregate radiative forcing impact; however, it is anticipated that their contribution to overall radiative forcing will increase (IPCC 2001). PFCs and SF_6 are predominantly emitted from various industrial processes including aluminum smelting, semiconductor manufacturing, electric power transmission and distribution, and magnesium casting. Currently, the radiative forcing impact of PFCs and SF_6 is also small; however, they have a significant growth rate, extremely long atmospheric lifetimes, and are strong absorbers of infrared radiation, and therefore have the potential to influence climate far into the future (IPCC 2001).

Carbon Monoxide (CO). Carbon monoxide has an indirect radiative forcing effect by elevating concentrations of CH_4 and tropospheric ozone through chemical reactions with other atmospheric constituents (e.g., the hydroxyl radical, OH) that would otherwise assist in destroying CH_4 and tropospheric ozone. Carbon monoxide is created when carbon-containing fuels are burned incompletely. Through natural processes in the atmos-

phere, it is eventually oxidized to CO_2 . Carbon monoxide concentrations are both short-lived in the atmosphere and spatially variable.

Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x). The primary climate change effects of nitrogen oxides (i.e., NO and NO_2) are indirect and result from their role in promoting the formation of ozone in the troposphere and, to a lesser degree, lower stratosphere, where it has positive radiative forcing effects. Additionally, NO_x emissions from aircraft are also likely to decrease methane concentrations, thus having a negative radiative forcing effect (IPCC 1999). Nitrogen oxides are created from lightning, soil microbial activity, biomass burning – both natural and anthropogenic fires – fuel combustion, and, in the stratosphere, from the photo-degradation of nitrous oxide (N_2O). Concentrations of NO_x are both relatively short-lived in the atmosphere and spatially variable.

Non-methane Volatile Organic Compounds (NMVOCs). Non-methane volatile organic compounds include compounds such as propane, butane, and ethane. These compounds participate, along with NO_x , in the formation of tropospheric ozone and other photochemical oxidants. NMVOCs are emitted primarily from transportation and industrial processes, as well as biomass burning and non-industrial consumption of organic solvents. Concentrations of NMVOCs tend to be both short-lived in the atmosphere and spatially variable.

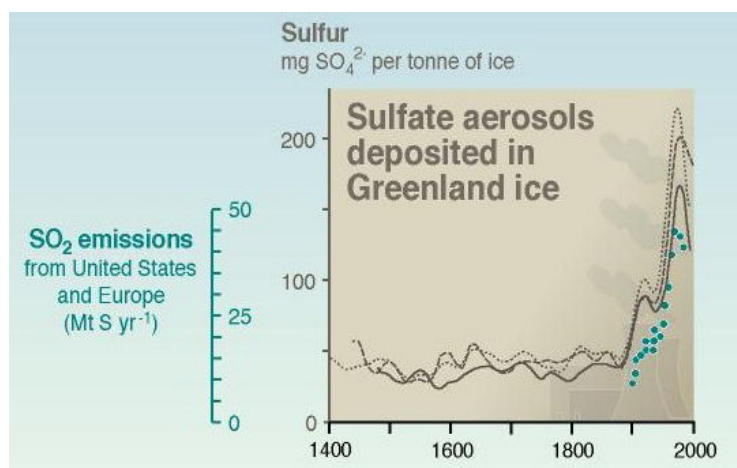


Fig. 4. Concentration of sulphur aerosols deposited in Greenland ice

Aerosols. Aerosols are extremely small particles or liquid droplets found in the atmosphere. They can be produced by natural events such as dust storms and volcanic activity, or by anthropogenic processes such as fuel combustion and biomass burning. They affect radiative forcing in both direct and indirect ways: directly by scattering and absorbing solar and thermal infrared radiation; and indirectly by increasing droplet counts that modify the formation, precipitation efficiency, and radiative properties of clouds. Aerosols are removed from the atmosphere relatively rapidly by precipitation. Because aerosols generally have short atmospheric lifetimes, and have concentrations and compositions that vary regionally, spatially, and temporally, their contributions to radiative forcing are difficult to quantify (IPCC 2001). The indirect radiative forcing from aerosols

is typically divided into two effects. The first effect involves decreased droplet size and increased droplet concentration resulting from an increase in airborne aerosols. The second effect involves an increase in the water content and lifetime of clouds due to the effect of reduced droplet size on precipitation efficiency (IPCC 2001). Recent research has placed a greater focus on the second indirect radiative forcing effect of aerosols. Various categories of aerosols exist, including naturally produced aerosols such as soil dust, sea salt, biogenic aerosols, sulphates, and volcanic aerosols, and anthropogenically manufactured aerosols such as industrial dust and carbonaceous aerosols (e.g., black carbon, organic carbon) from transportation, coal combustion, cement manufacturing, waste incineration, and biomass burning. The net effect of aerosols is believed to produce a negative radiative forcing effect (i.e., net cooling effect on the climate), although because they are short-lived in the atmosphere – lasting days to weeks – their concentrations respond rapidly to changes in emissions. Locally, the negative radiative forcing effects of aerosols can offset the positive forcing of greenhouse gases (IPCC 1996). "However, the aerosol effects do not cancel the global-scale effects of the much longer-lived greenhouse gases, and significant climate changes can still result" (IPCC 1996). The IPCC's Third Assessment Report notes that "the indirect radiative effect of aerosols is now understood to also encompass effects on ice and mixed-phase clouds, but the magnitude of any such indirect effect is not known, although it is likely to be positive" (IPCC 2001). Additionally, current research suggests that another constituent of aerosols, elemental carbon, may have a positive radiative forcing (Jacobson 2001). The primary anthropogenic emission sources of elemental carbon include diesel exhaust, coal combustion, and biomass burning.

GLOBAL WARMING POTENTIALS

Global Warming Potentials (GWPs) are intended as a quantified measure of the globally averaged relative radiative forcing impacts of a particular greenhouse gas. It is defined as the cumulative radiative forcing both direct and indirect effects integrated over a period of time from the emission of a unit mass of gas relative to some reference gas (IPCC 1996). Carbon dioxide (CO₂) was chosen as this reference gas. Direct effects occur when the gas itself is a greenhouse gas. Indirect radiative forcing occurs when chemical transformations involving the original gas produce a gas or gases that are greenhouse gases, or when a gas influences other radiatively important processes such as the atmospheric lifetimes of other gases. The relationship between gigagrams (Gg) of a gas and Tg CO₂ Eq. can be expressed as follows:

$$\text{Tg}(\text{CO}_2)\text{Eq} = (\text{Gg of gas}) \times (\text{GWP}) \times (\text{Tg}/1.000\text{Gg})$$

GWP values allow policy makers to compare the impacts of emissions and reductions of different gases. According to the IPCC, GWPs typically have an uncertainty of roughly ± 35 percent, though some GWPs have larger uncertainty than others, especially those which lifetimes have not yet been ascertained. In the following decision, the parties to the UNFCCC have agreed to use consistent GWPs from the IPCC Second Assessment Report (SAR), based upon a 100 year time horizon, although other time horizon values are available (see Table 2).

Table 2. Atmospheric lifetimes (years) and GWP values of some greenhouse gases.

Gas	Atmospheric lifetimes	100-year GWP	20-year GWP	500-year GWP
Carbon-dioxide (CO ₂)	50-200	1	1	1
Methane (CH ₄)	12	21	56	65
Nitrous-oxide (N ₂ O)	120	310	280	170
HFC-23	264	11,700	9,100	9,800
HFC-125	32.6	2,800	4,600	920
HFC-134a	14.6	1,300	3,400	420
HFC-143a	48.3	3,800	5,000	1,400
HFC-152a	1.5	140	460	42
HFC-227ea	36.5	2,900	4,300	950
HFC-236fa	209	6,300	5,100	4,700
HFC-4310mee	17.1	1,300	3,000	400
CF ₄	50,000	6,500	4,400	10,000
C ₂ F ₆	10,000	9,200	6,200	14,000
C ₄ F ₁₀	2,600	7,000	4,800	10,100
C ₆ F ₁₄	3,200	7,400	5,000	10,700
SF ₆	3,200	23,900	16,300	34,900

Greenhouse gases with relatively long atmospheric lifetimes (e.g., CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, HFCs, PFCs, and SF₆) tend to be evenly distributed throughout the atmosphere, and consequently global average concentrations can be determined. The short-lived gases such as water vapor, carbon monoxide, tropospheric ozone, other ambient air pollutants (e.g., NO_x, and NMVOCs) and tropospheric aerosols (e.g., SO₂ products and black carbon), however, vary spatially, and consequently it is difficult to quantify their global radiative forcing impacts. GWP values are generally not attributed to these gases that are short-lived and spatially inhomogeneous in the atmosphere.

Estimated relative contributions of particular greenhouse gases as well as other natural or anthropogenic factors to the radiative forcing, climate change and global warming of Earth's atmosphere are illustrated in figure 5.

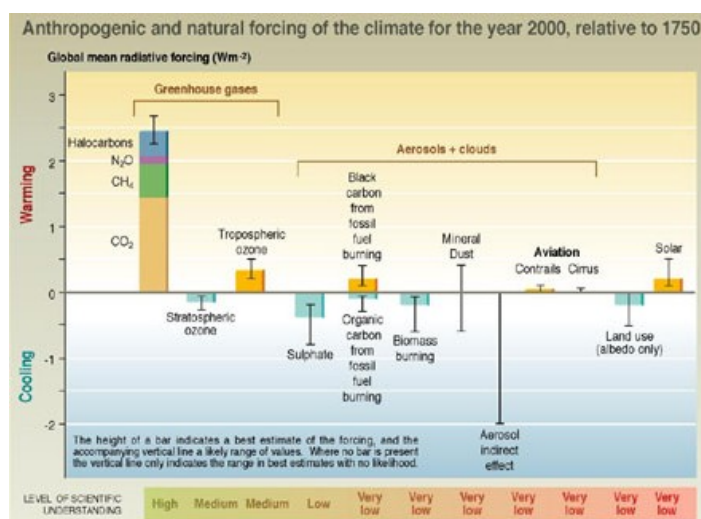


Fig. 5. Various impacts of various factors to the atmospheric radiative forcing.

GLOBAL WARMING AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Since industrial revolution concentrations of CO₂ have been increased by 30 %, of methane doubled and of N₂O increased for about 15 %. There are various predictions about further development and impact of this increase of greenhouse gases on the climate change. Generally, it has been predicted that CO₂ will increase for another 30-150% by 2100. It is evident that this will increase radiative forcing of the atmosphere and therefore increase of its temperature, precipitation level, ice melting and rise of sea level all around the world. These changes have already been started.

Global Earth's temperature has been increased for about 0.6 °C in the last Century, see figure 6. Level of ice has been decreased. Sea level has increased in the same period for about 4-8 inch or 10-20 cm. It is predicted that temperature will further increase for some 0.6 to 2.5 °C in the next 50 Years or for 1.4 to 5.8 °C in the next Century, with the significant regional variations. This will increase water evaporation and thus increase atmospheric precipitations. In the same time period, sea level will increase for about two feet or over 60 cm along the northern hemisphere.

All these changes will cause significant climate changes at Earth. Some models predict the shift of the green region at the north hemisphere for some 300 km toward north.

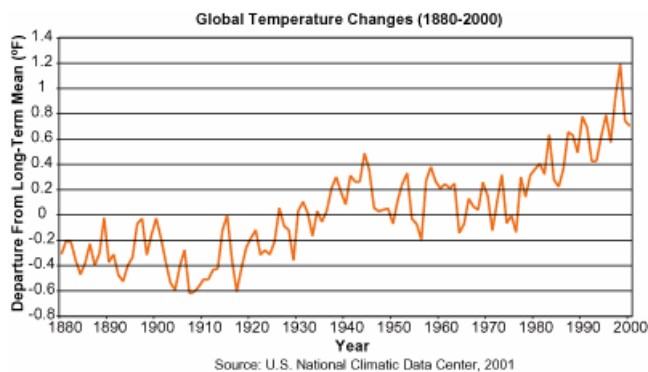


Fig. 6. Change of the Earth's atmosphere temperature in the last Century.

It has been estimated that all these changes will cause damage of the World's economy for some 40-60 billion dollars.

KYOTO PROTOCOL AND REDUCTION OF EMISSION OF GREENHOUSE GASES

Serious problems and possible consequences have brought discussed issues to the highest institutions, governments of developed countries and to the United Nations. Many conferences have been organized and devoted to these problems: Stockholm conference in 1972, Vienna convention in 1985, Montreal protocol in 1987. Following are Rio de Janeiro conference in 1992, Berlin conference in 1995 and Kyoto protocol in 1997. The last one is devoted to the reduction of greenhouse gases. By this protocol developed countries, highest producers of CO₂, are supposed to reduce greenhouse gases emission to proposed levels by 2010.

USA is producing 1/5 of total greenhouse gases and they are supposed to reduce emission for 24,3 %. However, USA has not approved this agreement, until now. On the other hand, the government of USA is aware of all consequences of discussed effects and they are currently in progress of gas emission reduction. In last two decades, USA has reduced greenhouse gases and ozone layer depleting gases for about 30 %. It is interesting to mention the way it has been achieved. Trading quote principles are introduced and it worked out efficiently.

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GLOBALNO ZAGREVANJE I EFEKAT STAKLENE BAŠTE

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Globalno zagrevanje ili promena klime se odnosi na dugovremenske fluktuacije temperature, padavina, vetrova i ostalih elemenata klimatskog sistema Zemlje. Prirodni procesi kao što su varijacije u solarnoj iradijaciji, varijacije parametara Zemljine orbite ili vulkanske aktivnosti mogu da izazovu promene klime. Klimatske promene međutim mogu da budu izazvane i promenama u koncentraciji određenih gasova u Zemljinj atmosferi koji utiču na apsorpciju zračenja na Zemlji i u njenoj atmosferi putem tzv. antropogenog efekta staklene bašte.