INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON climate change

IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate

Summary for Policymakers
Approved Draft

Headline Statements

Subject to Copyedit

A. OBSERVED CHANGES AND IMPACTS

Observed Physical Changes

A1. Over the last decades, global warming has led to widespread shrinking of the cryosphere, with mass loss from ice sheets and glaciers (*very high confidence*), reductions in snow cover (*high confidence*) and Arctic sea ice extent and thickness (*very high confidence*), and increased permafrost temperature (*very high confidence*). {2.2, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, Figures SPM.1, SPM.2}

A2. It is *virtually certain* that the global ocean has warmed unabated since 1970 and has taken up more than 90% of the excess heat in the climate system (*high confidence*). Since 1993, the rate of ocean warming has more than doubled (*likely*). Marine heatwaves have very likely doubled in frequency since 1982 and are increasing in intensity (*very high confidence*). By absorbing more CO_2, the ocean has undergone increasing surface acidification (*virtually certain*). A loss of oxygen has occurred from the surface to 1000 m (*medium confidence*). {1.4, 3.2, 5.2, 6.4, 6.7, Figures SPM.1, SPM.2}

A3. Global mean sea level (GMSL) is rising, with acceleration in recent decades due to increasing rates of ice loss from the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets (*very high confidence*), as well as continued glacier mass loss and ocean thermal expansion. Increases in tropical cyclone winds and rainfall, and increases in extreme waves, combined with relative sea level rise, exacerbate extreme sea level events and coastal hazards (*high confidence*). {3.3; 4.2; 6.2; 6.3; 6.8; Figures SPM.1, SPM.2, SPM.4, SPM.5}

Observed Impacts on Ecosystems

A4. Cryospheric and associated hydrological changes have impacted terrestrial and freshwater species and ecosystems in high mountain and polar regions through the appearance of land previously covered by ice, changes in snow cover, and thawing permafrost. These changes have contributed to changing the seasonal activities, abundance and distribution of ecologically, culturally, and economically important plant and animal species, ecological disturbances, and ecosystem functioning. (*high confidence*) {2.3.2, 2.3.3, 3.4.1, 3.4.3, Box 3.4, Figure SPM.2}

A5. Since about 1950 many marine species across various groups have undergone shifts in geographical range and seasonal activities in response to ocean warming, sea ice change and biogeochemical changes, such as oxygen loss, to their habitats (*high confidence*). This has resulted in shifts in species composition, abundance and biomass production of ecosystems, from the equator to the poles. Altered interactions between species have caused cascading impacts on ecosystem structure and functioning (*medium confidence*). In some marine ecosystems species are impacted by both the effects of fishing and climate changes (*medium confidence*). {3.2.3, 3.2.4, Box 3.4, 5.2.3, 5.3, 5.4.1, Figure SPM.2}

A6. Coastal ecosystems are affected by ocean warming, including intensified marine heatwaves, acidification, loss of oxygen, salinity intrusion and sea level rise, in combination with adverse effects from human activities on ocean and land (high confidence). Impacts are already observed on habitat area and biodiversity, as well as ecosystem functioning and services (*high confidence*). {4.3.2, 4.3.3, 5.3, 5.4.1, 6.4.2, Figure SPM.2}

Observed Impacts on People and Ecosystem Services

A7. Since the mid-20th century, the shrinking cryosphere in the Arctic and high-mountain areas has led to predominantly negative impacts on food security, water resources, water quality, livelihoods, health and well-being, infrastructure, transportation, tourism and recreation, as well as culture of human societies, particularly for Indigenous peoples (*high confidence*). Costs

and benefits have been unequally distributed across populations and regions. Adaptation efforts have benefited from the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge (*high confidence*). {1.1, 1.5, 1.6.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.4, 3.5, Figure SPM.2}

A8. Changes in the ocean have impacted marine ecosystems and ecosystem services with regionally diverse outcomes, challenging their governance (*high confidence*). Both positive and negative impacts result for food security through fisheries (*medium confidence*), local cultures and livelihoods (*medium confidence*), and tourism and recreation (*medium confidence*). The impacts on ecosystem services have negative consequences for health and well-being (*medium confidence*), and for Indigenous peoples and local communities dependent on fisheries (*high confidence*). {1.1, 1.5, 3.2.1, 5.4.1, 5.4.2, Figure SPM.2}

A9. Coastal communities are exposed to multiple climate-related hazards, including tropical cyclones, extreme sea levels and flooding, marine heatwaves, sea ice loss, and permafrost thaw (*high confidence*). A diversity of responses has been implemented worldwide, mostly after extreme events, but also some in anticipation of future sea level rise, e.g., in the case of large infrastructure. {3.2.4, 3.4.3, 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.4, 4.4.2, 5.4.2, 6.2, 6.4.2, 6.8, Box 6.1, Cross Chapter Box 9, Figure SPM.5}

B. PROJECTED CHANGES AND RISKS

***Projected Physical Changes*[1]**

B1. Global-scale glacier mass loss, permafrost thaw, and decline in snow cover and Arctic sea ice extent are projected to continue in the near-term (2031–2050) due to surface air temperature increases (*high confidence*), with unavoidable consequences for river runoff and local hazards (*high confidence*). The Greenland and Antarctic Ice Sheets are projected to lose mass at an increasing rate throughout the 21st century and beyond (*high confidence*).The rates and magnitudes of these cryospheric changes are projected to increase further in the second half of the 21st century in a high greenhouse gas emissions scenario (*high confidence*). Strong reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades are projected to reduce further changes after 2050 (*high confidence*). {2.2, 2.3, Cross-Chapter Box 6 in Chapter 2, 3.3, 3.4, Figure SPM.1, SPM Box SPM.1}

B2. Over the 21st century, the ocean is projected to transition to unprecedented conditions with increased temperatures (*virtually certain*), greater upper ocean stratification (*very likely*), further acidification (*virtually certain*), oxygen decline (*medium confidence*), and altered net primary production (*low confidence*). Marine heatwaves (*very high confidence*) and extreme El Niño and La Niña events (*medium confidence*) are projected to become more frequent. The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) is projected to weaken (*very likely*). The rates and magnitudes of these changes will be smaller under scenarios with low greenhouse gas emissions (*very likely*). {3.2; 5.2; 6.4; 6.5; 6.7; Box 5.1; Figures SPM.1, SPM.3}

B3. Sea level continues to rise at an increasing rate. Extreme sea level events that are historically rare (once per century in the recent past) are projected to occur frequently (at least once per year) at many locations by 2050 in all RCP scenarios, especially in tropical regions (*high confidence*). The increasing frequency of high water levels can have severe impacts in many locations depending on exposure (*high confidence*).
Sea level rise is projected to continue beyond 2100 in all RCP scenarios. For a high emissions scenario (RCP8.5), projections of global sea level rise by 2100 are greater than in AR5 due to a

[1] This report primarily uses RCP2.6 and RCP8.5 for the following reasons: These scenarios largely represent the assessed range for the topics covered in this report; they largely represent what is covered in the assessed literature, based on CMIP5; and they allow a consistent narrative about projected changes. RCP4.5 and RCP6.0 are not available for all topics addressed in the report. {Box SPM.1}

larger contribution from the Antarctic Ice Sheet (*medium confidence*). In coming centuries under RCP8.5, sea level rise is projected to exceed rates of several centimetres per year resulting in multi-metre rise (*medium confidence*), while for RCP2.6 sea level rise is projected to be limited to around 1m in 2300 (*low confidence*). Extreme sea levels and coastal hazards will be exacerbated by projected increases in tropical cyclone intensity and precipitation (*high confidence*). Projected changes in waves and tides vary locally in whether they amplify or ameliorate these hazards (*medium confidence*).{Cross-Chapter Box 5 in Chapter 1; Cross-Chapter Box 8 in Chapter 3; 4.1; 4.2; 5.2.2, 6.3.1; Figures SPM.1, SPM.4, SPM.5}

Projected Risks for Ecosystems

B.4 Future land cryosphere changes will continue to alter terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems in high-mountain and polar regions with major shifts in species distributions resulting in changes in ecosystem structure and functioning, and eventual loss of globally unique biodiversity (*medium confidence*). Wildfire is projected to increase significantly for the rest of this century across most tundra and boreal regions, and also in some mountain regions (*medium confidence*). {2.3.3, Box 3.4, 3.4.3}

B5. A decrease in global biomass of marine animal communities, their production, and fisheries catch potential, and a shift in species composition are projected over the 21st century in ocean ecosystems from the surface to the deep seafloor under all emission scenarios (*medium confidence*). The rate and magnitude of decline are projected to be highest in the tropics (*high confidence*), whereas impacts remain diverse in polar regions (*medium confidence*) and increase for high emission scenarios. Ocean acidification (*medium confidence*), oxygen loss (*medium confidence*) and reduced sea ice extent (*medium confidence*) as well as non-climatic human activities (*medium confidence*) have the potential to exacerbate these warming-induced ecosystem impacts. {3.2.3, 3.3.3, 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.4, 5.4.1, Figure SPM.3}

B6. Risks of severe impacts on biodiversity, structure and function of coastal ecosystems are projected to be higher for elevated temperatures under high compared to low emissions scenarios in the 21st century and beyond. Projected ecosystem responses include losses of species habitat and diversity, and degradation of ecosystem functions. The capacity of organisms and ecosystems to adjust and adapt is higher at lower emissions scenarios (*high confidence*). For sensitive ecosystems such as seagrass meadows and kelp forests, high risks are projected if global warming exceeds 2°C above pre-industrial temperature, combined with other climate-related hazards (*high confidence*). Warm water corals are at high risk already and are projected to transition to very high risk even if global warming is limited to 1.5°C (*very high confidence*). {4.3.3, 5.3, 5.5, Figure SPM.3}

Projected Risks for People and Ecosystem Services

B7. Future cryosphere changes on land are projected to affect water resources and their uses, such as hydropower (*high confidence*) and irrigated agriculture in and downstream of high-mountain areas (*medium confidence*), as well as livelihoods in the Arctic (*medium confidence*). Changes in floods, avalanches, landslides, and ground destabilization are projected to increase risk for infrastructure, cultural, tourism, and recreational assets (*medium confidence*). {2.3, 2.3.1, 3.4.3}

B8. Future shifts in fish distribution and decreases in their abundance and fisheries catch potential due to climate change are projected to affect income, livelihoods, and food security of marine resource-dependent communities (*medium confidence*). Long-term loss and degradation of marine ecosystems compromises the ocean's role in cultural, recreational, and intrinsic values important for human identity and well-being (*medium confidence*). {3.2.4, 3.4.3, 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 6.4}

B9. Increased mean and extreme sea level, alongside ocean warming and acidification, are projected to exacerbate risks for human communities in low-lying coastal areas (*high confidence*). In Arctic human communities without rapid land uplift, and in urban atoll islands, risks are projected to be moderate to high even under a low emissions scenario (RCP2.6) (medium confidence), including reaching adaptation limits (*high confidence*). Under a high emissions scenario (RCP8.5), delta regions and resource rich coastal cities are projected to experience moderate to high risk levels after 2050 under current adaptation (*medium confidence*). Ambitious adaptation including transformative governance is expected to reduce risk (*high confidence*), but with context-specific benefits. {4.3.3, 4.3.4, 6.9.2, Cross-chapter Box 9, SM4.3, Figure SPM.5}

C. IMPLEMENTING RESPONSES TO OCEAN AND CRYOSPHERE CHANGE

Challenges

C1. Impacts of climate-related changes in the ocean and cryosphere increasingly challenge current governance efforts to develop and implement adaptation responses from local to global scales, and in some cases pushing them to their limits. People with the highest exposure and vulnerability are often those with lowest capacity to respond (*high confidence*). {1.5, 1.7, Cross-Chapter Boxes 2–3 of Chapter 1, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.4, 3.2.4, 3.4.3, 3.5.2, 3.5.3, 4.1, 4.3.3, 4.4.3, 5.5.2, 5.5.3, 6.9}

Strengthening Response Options

C2. The far-reaching services and options provided by ocean and cryosphere-related ecosystems can be supported by protection, restoration, precautionary ecosystem-based management of renewable resource use, and the reduction of pollution and other stressors (*high confidence*). Integrated water management (*medium confidence*) and ecosystem-based adaptation (*high confidence*) approaches lower climate risks locally and provide multiple societal benefits. However, ecological, financial, institutional and governance constraints for such actions exist (*high confidence*), and in many contexts ecosystem-based adaptation will only be effective under the lowest levels of warming (*high confidence*). {2.3.1, 2.3.3, 3.2.4, 3.5.2, 3.5.4, 4.4.2, 5.2.2, 5.4.2, 5.5.1, 5.5.2, Figure SPM.5}

C3. Coastal communities face challenging choices in crafting context-specific and integrated responses to sea level rise that balance costs, benefits and trade-offs of available options and that can be adjusted over time (*high confidence*). All types of options, including protection, accommodation, ecosystem-based adaptation, coastal advance and retreat, wherever possible, can play important roles in such integrated responses (*high confidence*). {4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.4, 6.9.1, Cross-Chapter Box 9; Figure SPM.5}

Enabling Conditions

C4. Enabling climate resilience and sustainable development depends critically on urgent and ambitious emissions reductions coupled with coordinated sustained and increasingly ambitious adaptation actions (*very high confidence*). Key enablers for implementing effective responses to climate-related changes in the ocean and cryosphere include intensifying cooperation and coordination among governing authorities across spatial scales and planning horizons. Education and climate literacy, monitoring and forecasting, use of all available knowledge sources, sharing of data, information and knowledge, finance, addressing social vulnerability and equity, and institutional support are also essential. Such investments enable capacity-building, social learning, and participation in context-specific adaptation, as well as the negotiation of trade-offs and realisation of co-benefits in reducing short-term risks and building

long-term resilience and sustainability. (*high confidence*) This report reflects the state of science for ocean and cryosphere for low levels of global warming (1.5°C), as also assessed in earlier IPCC and IPBES reports. {1.1, 1.5, 1.8.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4, Figure 2.7, 2.5, 3.5.2, 3.5.4, 4.4, 5.2.2, Box 5.3, 5.4.2, 5.5.2, 6.4.3, 6.5.3, 6.8, 6.9, Cross-Chapter Box 9, Figure SPM.5}