

Interactive comment on “Ideas: a simple proposal to improve the contribution of IPCC WG1 to the assessment and communication of climate change risks” by Rowan T. Sutton

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I thank Piers Forster for commenting on my proposal. I'm glad we agree that WGI can do a lot better in supporting risk framing than in past reports, but I'm unclear from his remarks what he thinks WG1 should actually do differently, or whether he supports my specific proposal. I certainly do not believe WGI should “go it alone”: I proposed that “WGI authors should agree a modest number of key parameters ... [including]... some large-scale impact-relevant metrics (informed by WGII), such as the magnitude of increases in extreme rainfall.”

I agree that interaction with WGII on these matters is very important; moreover, devel-

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opment of physically plausible high impact scenarios (PPHIS) would provide a helpful new focus for the assessment of climate risks in a way that draws more fully on WGI expertise than in the past. WGII could make use of these scenarios, e.g. to further assess their impacts, and this would be helpful for the Synthesis Report. In my response to the referee comments by Stephane Hallegatte I have provided more explanation of PPHIS, with specific examples of how the concept could be readily applied within the framework of the existing IPCC calibrated language. This more detailed proposal is also attached here. It makes clear that I agree that seeking to quantify tail-likelihood too precisely is unwise, but also that this is not necessary to provide information that is very useful for risk assessment.

There is one point on which I strongly disagree. The comment that the bottom (low impact) tail is “just as important” as the upper (high impact) tail of the uncertainty distribution suggests the reviewer may have forgotten who the audience is. The IPCC is an assessment for policy makers not for climate scientists. For policy makers, high impact scenarios are much more important than low impact ones which means that the IPCC - including WGI - has a duty to provide as detailed an assessment as possible of high impact scenarios. I would also refer Piers to the comments on my proposal by Kris de Meyer and Ted Shepherd.

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