

Sea-Level Rise and Human Rights: Pragmatism v. Realism?

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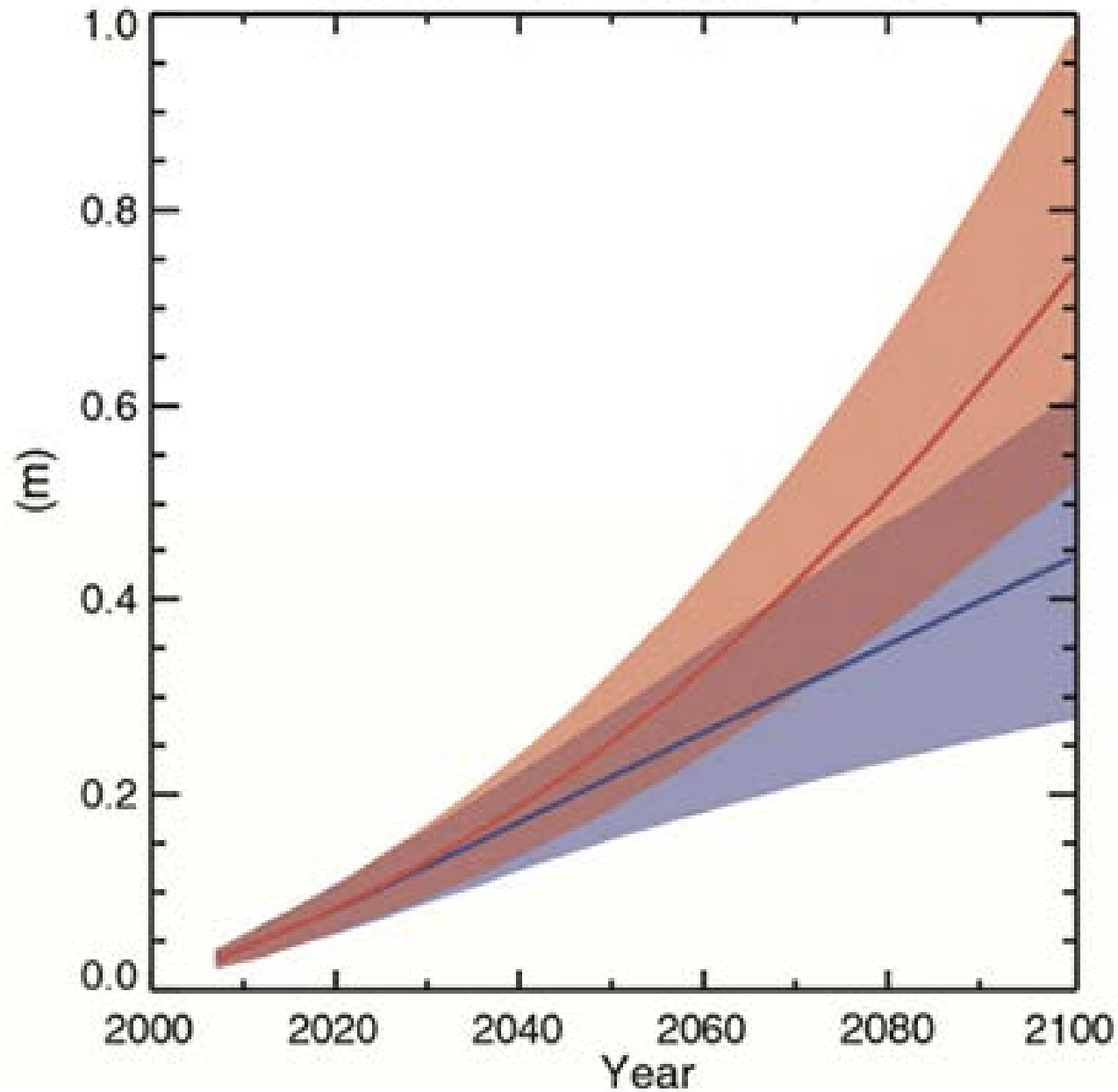
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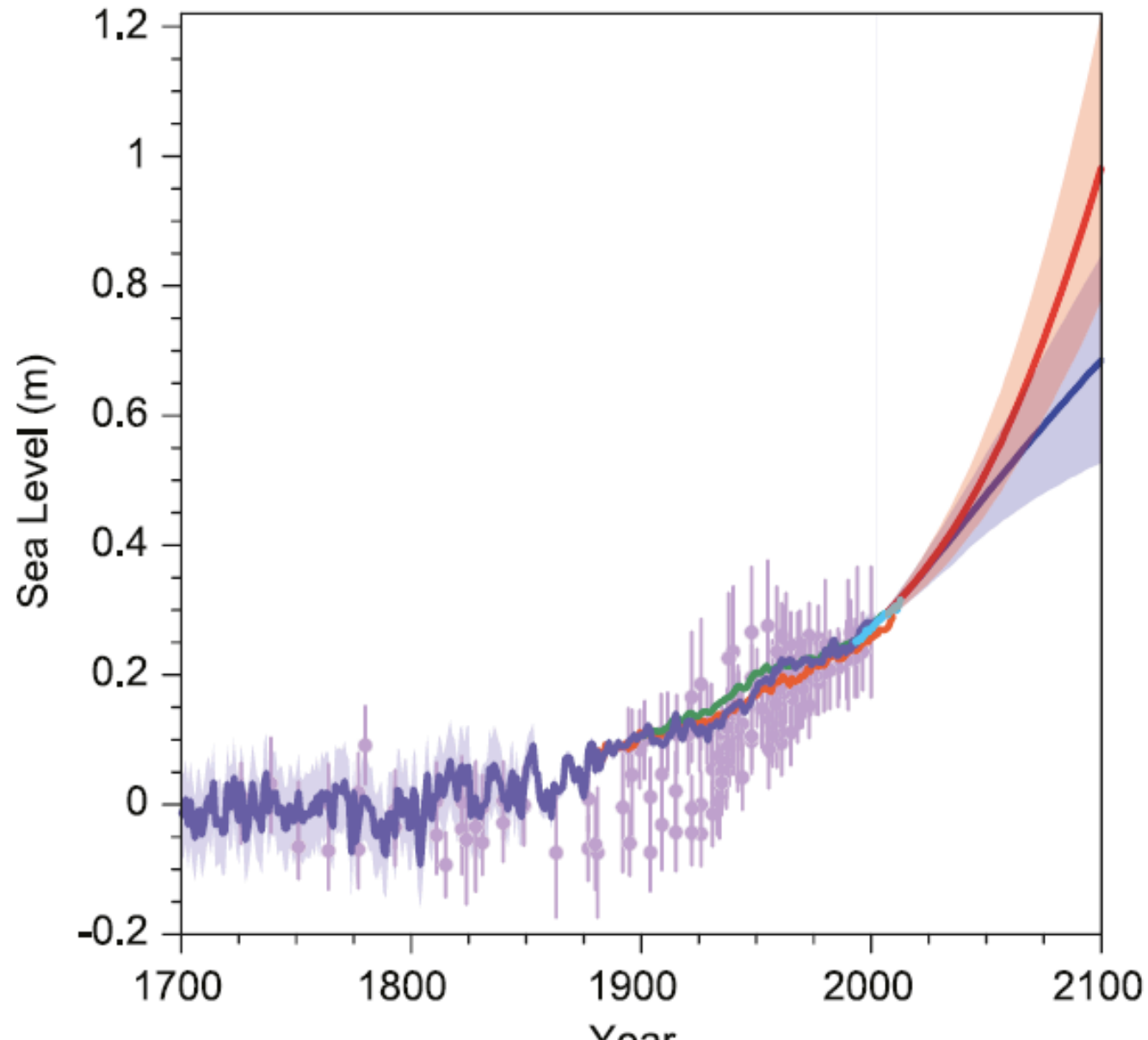
OHCHR statement March 6, 2015

- [H]uman-induced climate change is not only an assault on the world's shared ecosystem but it also undercuts "the rights to health, to food, to water and sanitation, to adequate housing and – for the people of small island states and coastal communities – even the right to self-determination."
- If the islands of Kiribati and Tuvalu disappear beneath the waves, all the trappings of a modern state - government buildings, courts, hospitals and schools - will vanish with them. Their peoples' right to self-determination will be undermined. Their leaders will have to find ways of reconstituting their states elsewhere, or persuade another government to provide their citizens with passports, welfare and protection. If they can't do this, these "climate change refugees" will become stateless.

Global mean sea level rise



Sea level rise, 1700-2100

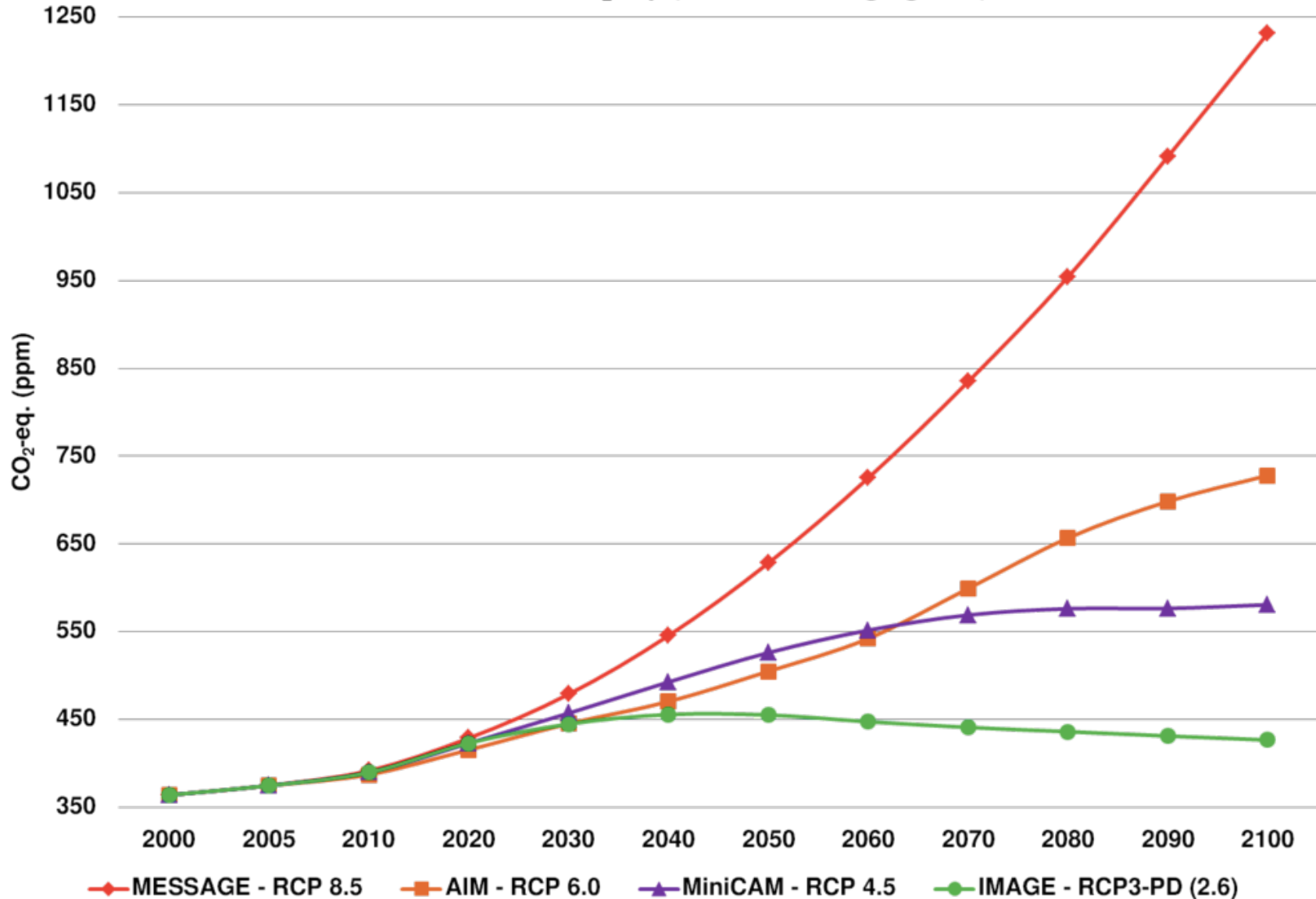


IPCC

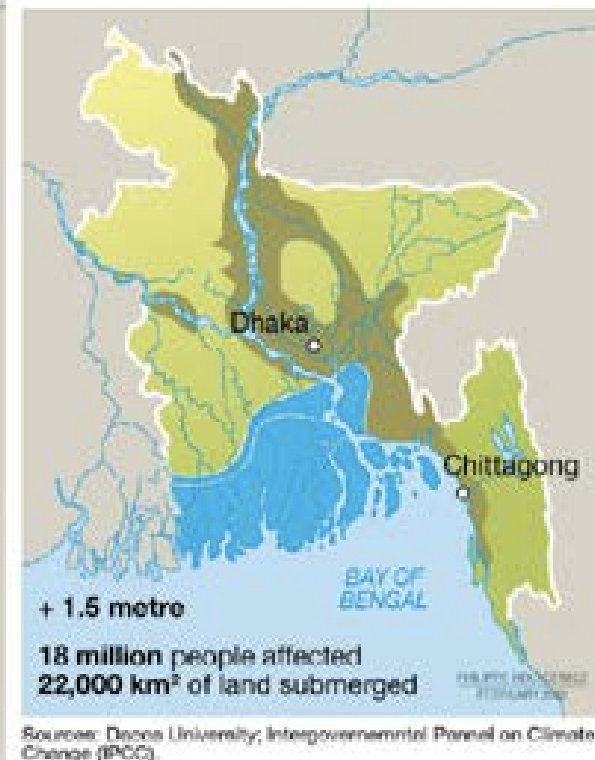
- It is virtually certain that **global mean sea level rise will continue beyond 2100**, with sea level rise due to thermal expansion to continue for many centuries. Longer term sea level rise depends on future emissions.
- The few available process-based models indicate global mean sea level rise by 2300 to be **less than 1 m for greenhouse gas concentrations that peak and decline and do not exceed 500 ppm CO₂-equivalent** but **1–3 m for concentrations above 700 ppm CO₂-equivalent**

RCP scenarios expressed in ppm

Concentration - CO₂-eq. (incl. all forcing agents)

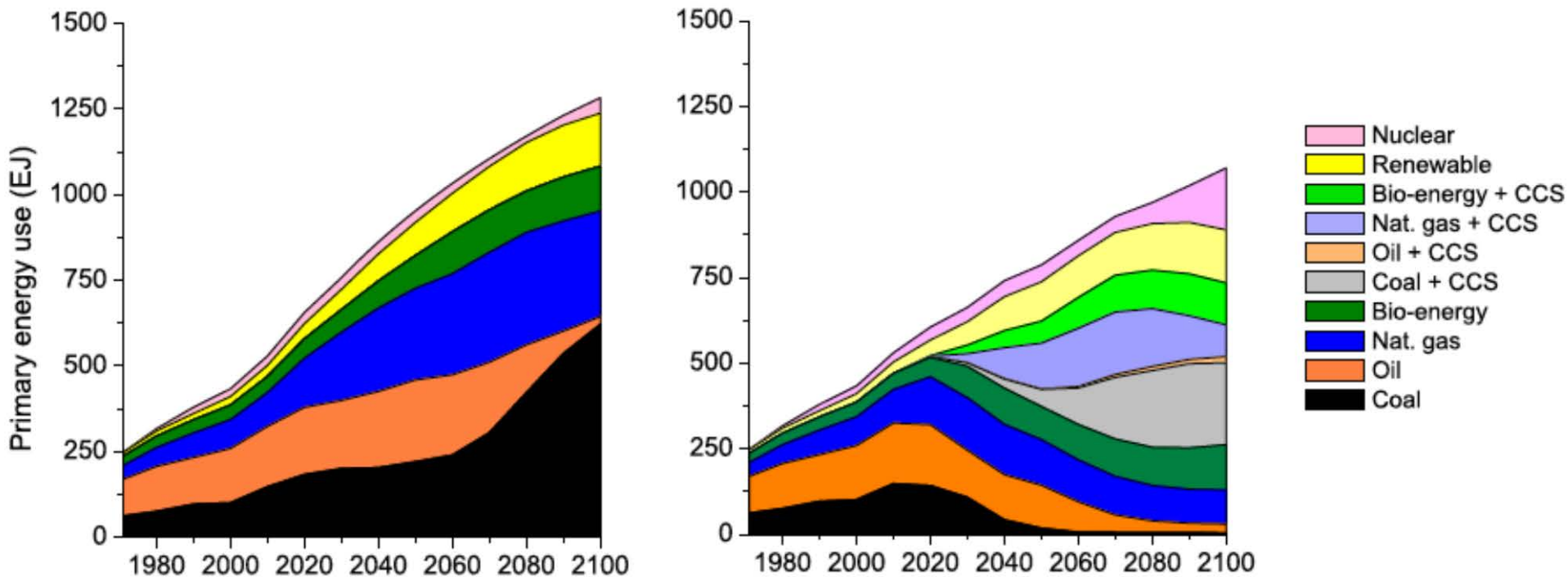


Bangladesh, sea-level rise



RCP2.6 – future energy use

Trends in global energy use for the baseline BAU 4° scenario (left) and the RCP2.6 mitigation 2° scenario (right) (CCS=Carbon Capture and Storage)



Source: DP van Vuuren et al. (2011) 'RCP2.6: exploring the possibility to keep global mean temperature increase below 2°C' 109 Climatic Change 95–116, 102

Male Declaration (2007)

- *Concerned* that climate change has clear and immediate implications for the full enjoyment of human rights including inter alia the right to life, the right to take part in cultural life, the right to use and enjoy property, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to food, and the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health;
- Do solemnly request:
- 1. The international community to commit ... to a formal process that will ensure a post-2012 consensus to protect people, planet and prosperity by taking urgent action to stabilize the global climate and ensure that temperature rises fall well below 2°C above pre-industrial averages, and that greenhouse gas concentrations are less than 450ppm, consistent with the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities.