

1 **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

2 This section presents our conclusions regarding the present state of development and use
3 of scenarios for climate-change applications, and some recommendations for specific changes or
4 initiatives to advance current practice to make scenarios more useful.

5 Before doing so, we briefly reprise some key definitional points, because uses of the term
6 scenarios are so divergent. We have defined scenarios as descriptions of future conditions
7 produced to inform decision-making under uncertainty. This definition distinguishes scenarios
8 from assessments, models, decision analyses, and other decision-support activities. As
9 descriptions of potential future conditions, scenarios can serve as inputs to such activities, but are
10 not identical to these, and not alternatives to them.

11 We have also distinguished scenarios from other types of future statements intended to
12 inform decisions, such as projections, predictions, and forecasts. Relative to these, scenarios
13 tend to be more multivariate (but still schematic), tend to be developed in groups, and tend to
14 presume lower predictive confidence. The last condition is the case in part because scenarios
15 tend to be used in situations where the basis for forecasting is less established because of deeper
16 uncertainties, or for situations that pertain to further in the future beyond the range for which
17 there is high confidence in specific projections, even contingent ones.

18 Having distinguished scenarios from these related activities, we consider a broad set of
19 scenarios of diverse characteristics and uses, including simple and complex, various
20 combinations of quantitative and qualitative, and positive and normative. Unless stated
21 otherwise, our conclusions and recommendations pertain to this whole set. Where we intend
22 them to apply to only certain types or uses of scenarios, we state this explicitly.

23 **5.1 Use of Scenarios in Climate-Change Decisions**

24 **Scenarios can make valuable contributions to climate-change decision-making.** Many of
25 the decisions that will comprise the societal response to climate change – whether mitigation,
26 adaptation, or some other form of response – involve high stakes, deep uncertainties, and
27 long time horizons. Scenarios can make valuable contributions to these decisions by
28 structuring present knowledge and uncertainty, prompting critical examination of present
29 assumptions and practices, stimulating new insights, identifying key pitfalls or opportunities,
30 or providing a framework for the assessment of particular decisions. For some decisions, that
31 involve irreversible near-term commitment to choices whose consequences extend over a
32 horizon involving substantial uncertainties, some form of scenario-based reasoning may be
33 essential.

34 **There is a big gap between the use of scenarios in current practice and their potential**
35 **contributions.** Despite this evident value and capability, many climate- related decisions that
36 could benefit from scenarios (e.g., many decisions regarding long-term management and
37 investments in climate-sensitive areas such as freshwater systems or coastal zones) are not
38 using them. Indeed, many such decisions are still being made without considering climate
39 change at all. Conversely, many exercises producing climate-change scenarios have only

1 weak and indirect connections to practical decisions related to climate-change mitigation or
2 adaptation.

3 ***Interest in considering and using climate-change scenarios is sharply increasing.*** There
4 appears to be a rapid increase in interest now underway in considering climate-change
5 scenarios in diverse decision and planning processes. This trend is strongest for planners and
6 decision-makers concerned with climate-change impacts and adaptation. The trend reflects
7 the combined effects of advanced in scientific understanding of climate change, maturation
8 of models and analytic tools, and increased recognition of the potential importance of climate
9 change by decision-makers. Given the high general concern about climate change and the
10 advance of background scientific knowledge, we expect this trend to continue, for these and
11 other types of decisions.

12 ***Scenarios of global emissions and resultant climate change are required by many diverse***
13 ***climate-related decision-makers.*** Although climate-change decision-makers and their
14 particular needs from scenarios are highly diverse, many will need scenarios of global
15 emissions and resultant climate change and many more will need information that depends
16 upon these. Commonly provided scenarios of these types can serve these needs of extremely
17 diverse decision-makers, provided they are presented with enough transparency and
18 documentation about their underlying reasoning and assumptions.

19 ***Beyond global climate forcings and resultant climate changes, decision-makers' needs***
20 ***from climate-change scenarios are highly diverse.*** Different climate-change decision-
21 makers will have greatly differing information needs from scenarios, in the factors and
22 variables included, the time and spatial scale at which they are provided, and the breadth and
23 interpretation of uncertainty represented. One dimension on which these needs can be
24 distinguished is the type of decision-maker: national officials, impacts and adaptation
25 managers, and technology and energy managers. The means for meeting these additional
26 needs will likely be diverse too. Some will call for additional, separate capabilities. For all of
27 them, it is likely that scenarios will have to be updated frequently based on new knowledge,
28 experience, and priorities – much more frequently than the time horizons of the decisions.

29 ***Impacts and Adaptation Managers are a major group of scenario users with distinct***
30 ***information needs.*** Impacts and adaptation managers – including both national officials and
31 others responsible for more specific domains of impact – will need climate-change scenarios,
32 driven by specified global emissions scenarios, to provide information about potential
33 climate-related stresses on their areas of responsibility. In addition, they will need climate,
34 environmental, and socio-economic information specific to their area of responsibility, at the
35 appropriate spatial and temporal scale. Meeting these needs will require both easy access to
36 centrally produced climate scenario information and associated tools and support, and
37 development of decentralized capabilities for developing and applying additional scenario-
38 related information. Although not identical, many of these specific information needs are
39 likely to be similar in character for many particular locations and types of impact.

40 ***Meeting information needs for impacts and adaptation may require a cross-scale***
41 ***organizational structure.*** The combination of centralized and decentralized information

1 needs suggest the desirability of a cross-scale organizational structure – a linked network of
2 institutions at the international, national, and sub-national level – for providing scenario-
3 related information. Such a structure would combine central provision of nationally or
4 globally consistent climate and socio-economic scenarios; decentralized elaboration of these
5 with variables and characteristics especially required for particular impact analysis or
6 drawing on superior local knowledge; and provision of tools and resources to allow
7 modification of regional socio-economic scenarios and elaboration of new ones within loose
8 larger-scale consistency constraints, to address specific regional capabilities and concerns.

9 ***Scenarios for Impact and Adaptation Managers should be based on emissions assumptions***
10 ***that presume a likely range of mitigation interventions, now and in the future.*** The
11 emissions assumptions underlying scenarios for impacts managers should be based on the
12 likely range of future global emissions trajectories, including explicit assumptions about what
13 degrees of further mitigation effort are likely over time. This will typically imply a narrower
14 range of emission futures than is considered in scenarios to support mitigation decisions.

15 ***Mitigation Policy-Makers are also a major group of climate-change scenario users with***
16 ***distinct needs.*** Most mitigation policy-makers are national officials making national policy
17 and participating in international negotiations, but this group also includes sub-national
18 officials when they share mitigation responsibilities or undertake mitigation initiatives.
19 Serious mitigation initiatives are likely to represent major policy innovations and carry
20 significant risks of many kinds, including the effectiveness and cost of the policies but also
21 their effects on government budgets, competitiveness of particular industries, opportunities
22 for national technological capabilities, etc. Decision-makers considering such policies will
23 need scenarios of global and national emissions trends, resultant climate change, and
24 aggregate impacts. In addition, they will need to consider many factors specific to their
25 jurisdiction – e.g., national policies, institutions, economic structure, technological
26 capabilities, and the detailed structure of national emissions – and information about the
27 relevant policy and bargaining environment for their choices, including alternative scenarios
28 of other nations' mitigation strategies and various degrees of implementation and compliance
29 with international mitigation decisions.

30 ***Scenarios for mitigation decisions should include a wide range of baseline emissions***
31 ***assumptions and not pre-judge the likely level of mitigation effort.*** In contrast to scenarios
32 for impacts and adaptation decisions, those used for mitigation decisions should not estimate
33 the likely level of mitigation effort. Rather, mitigation decisions should consider the full
34 range of potential mitigation choices on the agenda, defined relative to baseline assumptions
35 that, as much as possible, reflect only efforts already enacted or committed, including a range
36 of reasonable assumptions about implementation and compliance. This will typically imply a
37 wider range of emissions futures than is considered in scenarios used to support impacts and
38 adaptation decision-making.

39 ***Mitigation Decision-Makers can use target-driven scenarios for backcasting.*** Mitigation
40 decision-making may also benefit from scenarios that impose explicit future environmental
41 targets such as limits on emissions or atmospheric concentrations, together with assumptions
42 about policy and implementation elsewhere, and reason backwards to explore alternative

1 paths to, and implications and requirements of, attaining that goal, including feasibility,
2 costs, and tradeoffs. These must be defined in ways relevant to the level of decision-making
3 being informed, i.e., alternative national targets to inform national policy-making, in the
4 broader context of alternative global baselines or global targets.

5 ***Mitigation decisions will require scenario development capacity at the national level.*** While
6 core scenarios of global emissions and climate-change can provide a partial input into
7 mitigation decisions, the scope and specificity of additional information needs for these
8 decisions suggests the need for additional elaboration of relevant scenarios at the national
9 level (or sub-national, if mitigation decisions are being considered there), generated in
10 consultation with policy-makers.

11 ***Energy Resource and Technology Managers are a third major group of climate-change***
12 ***scenario users with distinct needs.*** Energy resource and technology managers concerned
13 with private responses to mitigation policy primarily need scenarios that represent alternative
14 policy regimes. Emissions and climate change underlie these as influences on policy
15 decisions, but do not capture the most important uncertainties for these decision-makers.
16 While many actors may wish to generate these scenarios privately to keep their assumptions
17 and analyses confidential, there may also be value in multi-party collaborative scenario-
18 building exercises in which today's policy-makers and corporate planners jointly examine
19 what range of policy, economic, and energy regimes is plausible or likely in 30 years.

20 5.2 *Use of Scenarios in Climate-Change Assessments*

21 ***Large-scale, official assessments are the major use for scenarios at present, and are likely***
22 ***to remain an important use.*** Large-scale, official assessments represent the most prominent
23 demand for climate-related scenarios at present, and are likely to remain major users,
24 particularly for coordinated scenarios of global emissions and resultant climate-change.

25 ***Within assessments, scenarios are principally used to support further analysis, modeling,***
26 ***and assessment.*** When scenarios are used in assessments, some users are clearly identified:
27 e.g., climate modelers are major users of emissions scenarios, while impacts assessors and
28 modelers are major users of climate-change scenarios. Users of these types have specific
29 needs from scenarios, and close consultation is possible between scenario producers and
30 users to meet these needs. Substantial progress has been made in providing useful scenarios
31 for these groups, at both the national and international level. These efforts should be
32 continued and expanded.

33 ***The presentation of scenarios in assessments leads to many additional uses, not foreseen.***
34 Scenarios presented in large-scale assessments gain prominent dissemination that results in
35 their being put to many uses their developers did not foresee. Scenarios should strive for
36 maximal clarity of documentation and transparency about underlying reasoning and
37 assumptions, to improve the ease of use and reduce the risk of misunderstanding in such
38 derivative uses, although they cannot anticipate all information needs of an open-ended set of
39 diverse potential uses.

1 ***In assessments, scenarios can be an effective issue-framing device.*** Also because of their
2 prominent dissemination, scenarios presented in major assessments can exercise substantial
3 influence over the framing of policy discussions, or provide simple, widely used metrics of
4 the seriousness of the issue. They may consequently exercise broad influence over many
5 decisions that depend upon such an aggregate perception of seriousness. The expectation of
6 such influence further heightens the responsibility for transparency in the production of
7 scenarios.

8 ***Scenarios contain unavoidable elements of judgment in both their production and use.***
9 Although they draw on relevant data, knowledge, and analysis, scenarios contain unavoidable
10 elements of judgment. This puts serious responsibilities onto scenario developers, and also
11 means that there is no authoritative way to resolve arguments over whether a scenario is
12 plausible or not. When a wide enough range of potential futures is considered, some
13 scenarios are likely to draw criticism, in part motivated by opposition to their foreseeable
14 implications for action. Any scenario can be attacked as unreasonable, speculative or
15 unlikely, and close enough scrutiny of any scenario can usually reveal inconsistencies, but
16 these do not provide sufficient basis for excluding a scenario from consideration. Indeed,
17 scenarios designed to represent extreme events, or to lie near an end of a presently judged
18 distribution, should by definition appear unlikely. The most productive response to such
19 criticisms lies in transparency about the process, reasoning, and assumptions used to produce
20 scenarios, which can both shift arguments to underlying uncertainties that are worth arguing
21 about, and help limit biases in the production of scenarios.
22

23 ***5.3 A Sustained Capacity for Scenarios***

24 ***CCSP should provide resources to support a new capacity for producing, analyzing,***
25 ***supporting, and updating scenarios of global emissions and resultant climate change.***
26 Because scenarios of global emissions and resultant climate change are needed directly or
27 indirectly for so many diverse uses, there is strong value in centralized, coordinated provision
28 of these. A capacity should be created to stimulate, produce, analyze, and disseminate global
29 emissions and climate-change scenarios, and to periodically evaluate and update them in
30 light of new knowledge, experience, and decision needs.

31 ***Several institutional models would be feasible for this capacity.*** It could be US-based or
32 international. It could be a government office, a non-governmental organization, or a
33 collaborative multi-party network. And it could do any or all of producing scenarios itself,
34 convening activities to produce scenarios with broader participation, or receiving and
35 reviewing scenarios produced by others.

36 ***Several criteria would have to be met, however, for this capacity to be effective:***

37 ***Adequate sustained resources.*** The capacity must build and maintain a sophisticated
38 analytic capability, and develop skills and institutional memory regarding prior
39 experiences, successes, and failures. This requirement precludes the scenarios capacity
40 being a series of *ad hoc* one-time activities or a part-time burden imposed on people and
41 organizations with other full-time responsibilities.

1 ***Connections with outside expertise, analysis, models.*** The capacity needs to build and
2 maintain close collegial connections with outside networks of researchers and analysts in
3 multiple fields of expertise, including emissions modelers, climate scientists and
4 modelers, impacts researchers, and resource managers – including collaboration with
5 parallel international and national efforts, including scenario projects established to serve
6 more specific needs.

7 ***Insulation from political control.*** For the scenarios and analyses based on them to be
8 perceived as credible by their diverse users, the capacity needs enough insulation from
9 political control, at both the national or international level, to prevent scenarios from
10 becoming proxies for conflict over preferred near-term policies, and to allow exploration
11 of the implications of alternative futures that represent plausible risks but that some major
12 political actors would find objectionable.

13 ***Maximum transparency.*** The capacity must strive for maximal transparency regarding
14 inputs, models, assumptions, and reasoning employed in developing scenarios, as well as
15 any significant disagreements that arose and how they were resolved and any remaining
16 weaknesses recognized by the developers. The broader and more diverse the collection
17 of intended uses and users, the more crucial is transparency of the scenario-production
18 process – because different users may require scenarios produced using different
19 underlying assumptions, and they must be able to track the underlying logic to exercise
20 this choice. This would enhance credibility in the scenario-development process. While
21 calls for such transparency are widely made, experience suggests it is difficult to achieve,
22 particularly for such matters as disagreements or recognized weaknesses that may risk
23 professional embarrassment. Still, achieving more transparency and more widely
24 informed debate on such matters is essential for advancing scenario methods.

25 ***A mandate to support development of methods and models.*** Attempts to characterize
26 emissions trends and the socio-economic factors driving them have repeatedly had to
27 consider new issues, identify newly relevant data sources, and develop and test new
28 modeling capabilities. High-priority methodological challenges beyond model and data
29 development also arise frequently, such as the current need for better methods to integrate
30 qualitative and quantitative aspects of scenarios. A major contribution of this centralized
31 scenarios capacity can be to support exploration, development, critical examination, and
32 testing of such methods, and dissemination of results and lessons learned.

33 ***Authority for effective coordination and quality control.*** The capacity needs authority
34 to provide effective coordination of scenarios for transparency, consistency (e.g., of units,
35 formats, etc.), and quality control. A weak “clearinghouse” for scenarios that lacks
36 authority to critically scrutinize scenarios, request changes, and grant or withhold some
37 status or benefit (e.g., resources, publication, certification, or inclusion in some process)
38 based on a judgment of acceptable standards being met is not an adequate model.

39 ***5.4 Characteristics of ‘core’ emissions and climate scenarios***

1 **Scenarios should be global in scope and century-scale in time horizon.** Core emissions and
2 climate scenarios should be global in scope; should specify all major climate-relevant
3 emissions and other human perturbations, as well as their underlying socio-economic drivers;
4 and should extend over time horizons of at least 100 years, including some with horizons of
5 200-300 years, to support assessments of long-term vulnerability to sea-level rise.

6 **Several distinct logical types of emissions scenarios should be developed.** Socio-economic
7 and emissions scenarios should include some combination of alternative baselines,
8 alternative levels of incremental stringency of mitigation effort, and specified future targets
9 to support backcasting and feasibility analysis.

10 **Emissions scenarios should be based on diverse socio-economic futures.** Emissions and
11 associated socio-economic scenarios should explore a wider range of potential socio-
12 economic and policy futures than has been done, including explicit examination of the
13 implications of varying patterns of mitigation effort. What would the world look like if
14 emissions grow strongly for several decades with little control effort, then we shift to
15 stringent mitigation efforts? What if part of the world makes a lot of effort and part makes
16 very little? What if development stagnates in major world regions? Considering such varied
17 future histories is crucial for considering long-term risks and opportunities from major
18 mitigation choices.

19 **Scenarios should reflect various explicit degrees of coordination.** Scenarios provided
20 should reflect explicit variation in the degree and type of coordination, including for
21 example, a) provision of a few standard scenarios to meet the needs of downstream models
22 and analyses for coordinated inputs in intercomparison exercises (i.e., standard emissions
23 scenarios for climate-model comparison, standard climate scenarios for impact model
24 comparison); b) scenarios generated using multiple models with common exogenous inputs,
25 for exploration of uncertainties related to model structure, and; c) non-standardized scenarios
26 produced at the initiative of researchers and modelers seeking to explore alternative
27 assumptions or meet specific user needs – provided these meet basic standards of quality
28 control, transparency, and documentation.

29 **Global socio-economic and emissions scenarios should include and link qualitative and**
30 **quantitative components.** Global scenarios of emissions and the socio-economic variables
31 underlying them should include qualitative and narrative scenario components, as well as
32 quantitative projections of emissions and underlying socio-economic drivers, and should
33 include a sustained analytic effort to integrate qualitative and quantitative components. The
34 qualitative, narrative elements can provide a vehicle for exploration of major historical
35 uncertainties with large implications for global emissions and climate change; provide a
36 coherent logical structure that ties together quantitative assumptions on multiple variables;
37 and provide guidance for extension of scenarios through elaboration of additional detail.
38 Gaining these benefits will require much more sustained effort to integrate quantitative
39 models of emissions and their socio-economic determinants with qualitative and narrative
40 scenarios, to iterate between them, and to critically examine each in light of the other, than
41 has been made in climate-change scenario exercises thus far.

1 ***Emission scenarios should connect narratives to model structures, not parameter values.***

2 These efforts should strive to connect alternative qualitative narratives to alternative logical
3 structures of quantitative models, not just alternative parameter values. Alternative
4 quantifications conditioned on the same narrative storyline and associated basic causal logic
5 can provide insight into uncertainty in key parameters such as GDP and emissions,
6 conditional on the broad historical conditions defined by the storyline, provided model
7 quantifications are not harmonized on these outputs.

8 ***Centrally provided scenarios of global emissions and climate change cannot provide all***
9 ***information needed for either mitigation or adaptation decisions at national or smaller***

10 ***scale.*** Information needs for decision-making at national or smaller spatial scale, whether
11 for adaptation or mitigation, may be finer-scale and more detailed than can be provided by
12 the global-scale scenarios capacity, for both climate and socio-economic information. For
13 emissions and socio-economic information, the global capacity can provide scenarios of
14 world trends in emissions, socio-economic conditions, and the large-scale pattern of policy
15 response elsewhere that can serve as background information to be elaborated or modified by
16 national scenario processes. For climate information, the global capacity can provide access
17 to climate-model output, plus access and support for statistical methods or finer-scale
18 modeling tools for producing required finer-scale data for particular impact and adaptation
19 applications.

20 ***5.5 Scenario Process: Developer-User Interactions***

21 ***In general, there are benefits in collaboration between scenario developers and users,***
22 ***particularly at the beginning and ending stages of a scenario exercise.*** There is always
23 value in close communication and collaboration between the developers and intended users
24 of scenarios, although the most appropriate means of realizing this vary substantially among
25 scenario exercises. User engagement is most important in the initial scoping and design of a
26 scenario exercise, and in the evaluation and application of the scenarios generated. The value
27 of user engagement in the detailed middle stages of scenario development, quantification,
28 elaboration, and checking, depends on the precise conditions.

29 ***The value of such interactions, and the ease of achieving them, are likely to be greater***
30 ***when scenario users are few in number, clearly identified, and similar in their interests***
31 ***and perspectives.*** When the set of users for scenarios is clearly identified, relatively small,
32 and homogenous, there is the strongest case for close and intensive collaboration between
33 users and developers throughout the process. When potential users are numerous and
34 diverse, such intensive engagement may be infeasible, and various structured processes for
35 consultation, representation, and information exchange are needed. While progress has been
36 made in new methods to increase the numbers participating in scenario exercises, further
37 development of such methods is needed.

38 ***5.6 Communication of Scenarios***

39 ***Effective communication of scenarios is essential, including the means to reach audiences***
40 ***of diverse interests and technical skills.*** Scenarios must be communicated effectively to

1 their potential users, including both technical and non-technical audiences. In addition to the
2 contents or outputs of scenarios, communication must include associated documentation,
3 tools, and support for their use. Various methods should be used to promote broad
4 dissemination of scenario information; for instance, presentations, reports, websites, and
5 centralized data distribution centers. To facilitate user understanding of results, various
6 methods should be used to communicate numerical and technical information, including
7 multiple tabular, summary, and graphical formats, ideally with user-interactive capabilities.

8 ***Transparency of underlying reasoning and assumptions is crucial.*** Scenario
9 communication must also include transparent disclosure of the underlying assumptions,
10 models, and reasoning used to produce the scenarios, to support the credibility of scenarios,
11 to alert potential users to conditions under which they might wish to use or modify them, and
12 to promote dialogue that can support subsequent updating and improvement of scenarios.
13 When scenarios combine scientific uncertainty and uncertainties that arise from alternative
14 assumptions, this should be clearly conveyed. It is possible in virtually all cases to formulate
15 simple, accessible, honest descriptions of why a scenario was undertaken, why it was
16 necessary, what was done, how and why, and why it merits respect as a reasonable judgment.

17 ***5.7 Consistency and Integration in Scenarios***

18 ***Each scenario needs internal consistency.*** Any scenario should be internally consistent in its
19 assumptions, to the extent that this can be established given present knowledge. Carefully
20 pursuing consistency within individual scenarios can be an intensive and time-consuming
21 process, but is crucial to avoid problems that can discredit a scenario exercise.

22 ***In scenario exercises that use multiple models to explore potential future conditions, model***
23 ***inputs should be controlled for consistency, rather than model outputs.*** Use of multiple
24 models in parallel to produce alternative descriptions of future conditions can improve
25 understanding of uncertainties, if models are run under consistent assumptions about
26 exogenous inputs. Forcing convergence of outputs among multiple models suppresses model
27 variation, including variation from alternative causal structures, that could provide valuable
28 information about uncertainties. Temptation to seek a spurious increase in credibility by
29 forcing convergence of multiple model outputs should be resisted. The appropriate treatment
30 of quantities that are exogenous in some participating models and endogenous in others can
31 vary case by case. In general, however, forcing multiple models to convergent values of such
32 variables is not desirable.

33 ***An important exception to the advice not to control for consistency in model outputs is that***
34 ***such control can be valuable in exercises that specify common output targets for policy***
35 ***evaluation.*** For example, consistent emissions constraints are needed in order to explore
36 implications of alternative atmospheric concentration stabilization levels.

37 ***Transparency in reporting model differences, assumptions, and reasoning can help to***
38 ***overcome the presence of some inconsistencies in scenario generation.*** Ideally, multiple
39 scenarios in an exercise should differ from each other only on those issues that are
40 intentionally chosen to distinguish them, and be consistent on all other factors. This is not

1 always possible, particularly when scenarios are generated using different models. In this
2 case, it is particularly important to pursue maximal transparency about the models,
3 assumptions, and reasoning underlying each scenario – perhaps by publishing diagnostic
4 reports that include discussion of points of weakness, uncertainty, and disagreements and the
5 means used to resolve them.

6 **5.8 Treatment of Uncertainty in Scenarios**

7 ***More explicit characterization of probability judgments should be included in some future***
8 ***scenario exercises than has been practiced so far.*** The advantages of assigning explicit
9 characterization of probability to scenarios – or their consequences for a few key variables –
10 are likely in our judgment to outweigh their disadvantages. Such specification should be
11 pursued to a greater degree than has been done in major global-change scenario exercises to
12 date.

13 ***Including explicit probability judgments is likely to be more useful when key variables are***
14 ***few, quantitative outcomes are needed, and potential users are numerous and diverse.*** The
15 case for assigning explicit confidence or probability measures is strongest when scenarios’
16 most salient components are quantitative projections of a few key variables, such as
17 emissions or average temperature change over the globe or some region, because the
18 technical barriers to assigning probabilities are least severe in this case. The case is strongest
19 when a primary purpose of the scenario exercise is to provide inputs to other quantitative
20 assessment activities, or to inform decisions that primarily depend on one or a few key
21 quantitative variables, because these are situations in which at least some users are likely to
22 require probability judgments. The case is strongest when the set of potential scenario users
23 and uses is large and heterogeneous, because this situation provides the least opportunity for
24 informal or implicit communication of judgments of importance or confidence based on
25 intense, sustained collaboration between scenario developers and users.

26 ***Including explicit probability judgments is likely to be less useful when scenarios specify***
27 ***multiple characteristics, including prominent narrative or qualitative components; when***
28 ***the purpose of a scenario exercise is sensitivity analysis or heuristic exploration; and when***
29 ***potential users are few, similar, and known.*** When scenarios are primarily construed as
30 rich, qualitative narratives that present major alternative historical and socio-economic
31 trajectories, the technical obstacles to explicit probability assignment are greatest and the
32 confidence in scenario developers’ subjective probability assignments is likely to be lowest.
33 When the primary purpose of a scenario exercise is stimulate critical or creative thought, or
34 to conduct sensitivity analysis to probe the limits of a subsequent model or analysis or a
35 proposed robust decision strategy, or to explore ways of meeting a specified output target,
36 explicit probability assignment provides little or no benefit. When users are few,
37 homogeneous, and specifically identified, they or their proxies can be intensively involved in
38 the scenario generation exercise, allowing effective informal communication of developers’
39 judgments of relevant probabilities without requiring explicit formal statements.
40 Alternatively exercises with such intensive collaboration can support dialogs that engage
41 scenario users in the potentially illuminating exercise of assigning and discussing their own

1 probability judgments, rather than imposing that responsibility exclusively on the researchers
2 or analysts developing scenarios.

3 ***The centralized capacity we propose should endeavor to provide probability estimates for***
4 ***global emissions and climate-change scenarios.*** The global emissions and climate-change
5 scenarios produced by our proposed capacity should include explicit probability assignments
6 to ranges of their few key quantitative outputs, including global emissions and global-
7 average temperature change (conditional on specific underlying assumptions), because of the
8 large and diverse set of users to whom these are targeted. Emissions and climate scenarios
9 should typically present several paths that span a wide range of judged uncertainty, e.g., 95%
10 to 99%. In making these judgments, the distribution of previously produced or published
11 scenarios provides one source of guidance but is not authoritative, because these are not
12 independent and may have been developed for different questions and purposes.

13 ***Providing explicit probability and likelihood statements allows users to choose whether to***
14 ***use them or not.*** Some users may choose to use these explicitly in their subsequent analysis
15 or decision support, others may use them only to help decide which scenarios to use, while
16 still others may appropriately choose to disregard them entirely. Users may choose to use a
17 different group of scenarios or a different subset of the uncertainty range due to differences
18 in risk aversion, differences in the scope of their decision authority, or differences in
19 assumptions about decisions by other actors, present or future.

20 ***Scenario exercises should give more attention to extreme cases.*** Some uses of scenarios
21 require consideration of low-probability, high-consequence extreme cases, such as loss of a
22 major continental ice sheet or collapse of meridional ocean circulation. Consequently, such
23 scenarios should be included in large, general-purpose scenario exercises producing
24 emissions or climate-change scenarios, together with more likely middle-case scenarios.
25 Including extreme scenarios in a set makes it especially critical to be explicit and transparent
26 about the reasoning and assumptions underlying each scenario, and scenario developers'
27 judgments of relative likelihoods.
28