

# Model-based evidence of deep-ocean heat uptake during surface-temperature hiatus periods

Gerald A. Meehl<sup>1\*</sup>, Julie M. Arblaster<sup>1,2</sup>, John T. Fasullo<sup>1</sup>, Aixue Hu<sup>1</sup> and Kevin E. Trenberth<sup>1</sup>

1 **There have been decades, such as 2000–2009, when the**  
2 **observed globally averaged surface-temperature time series**  
3 **shows little positive or even slightly negative trend<sup>1</sup> (a hiatus**  
4 **period). However, the observed energy imbalance at the**  
5 **top-of-atmosphere for this recent decade indicates that a**  
6 **net energy flux into the climate system of about  $1\text{ W m}^{-2}$**   
7 **(refs 2,3) should be producing warming somewhere in the**  
8 **system<sup>4,5</sup>. Here we analyse twenty-first-century climate-model**  
9 **simulations that maintain a consistent radiative imbalance at**  
10 **the top-of-atmosphere of about  $1\text{ W m}^{-2}$  as observed for the**  
11 **past decade. Eight decades with a slightly negative global mean**  
12 **surface-temperature trend show that the ocean above 300 m**  
13 **takes up significantly less heat whereas the ocean below 300 m**  
14 **takes up significantly more compared with non-hiatus decades.**  
15 **The model provides a plausible depiction of processes in the**  
16 **climate system causing the hiatus periods, and indicates that a**  
17 **hiatus period is a relatively common climate phenomenon and**  
18 **may be linked to La Niña-like conditions.**

19 Observational datasets derived from the Argo float data and  
20 other sources indicate that the ocean heat content above about  
21 700 m did not increase appreciably during the 2000s, a time when  
22 the rise in surface temperatures also stalled<sup>6,7</sup>. Hiatus periods  
23 with little or no surface warming trend have occurred before in  
24 observations, and are seen as well in climate-model simulations<sup>1,8</sup>.  
25 So where does the excess heat in the climate system go if not  
26 to increase surface temperatures or appreciably increase upper-  
27 ocean heat content? There are suggestions that recent increases in  
28 stratospheric water vapour<sup>9</sup>, stratospheric aerosols<sup>10</sup>, tropospheric  
29 aerosols<sup>11</sup> or the record solar minimum<sup>11</sup> could have contributed  
30 to the most recent hiatus by decreasing the net top-of-atmosphere  
31 (TOA) energy imbalance. However, the observational analyses<sup>5</sup>  
32 inherently include these effects, and the model analysed here  
33 produces close to the observed net energy imbalance during hiatus  
34 periods, whereas some modelling studies do not<sup>12</sup>. Alternatively,  
35 significant heat could be sequestered in the deep ocean below 700 m  
36 on decadal timescales<sup>12–15</sup>. Here we examine simulations from a  
37 global coupled climate model to first show that the net TOA energy  
38 imbalance in this model is close to what has been observed over  
39 the past decade or so. Then we analyse where the heat could be  
40 going in the observed system during hiatus periods, and point to  
41 the processes that could be responsible.

42 Five ensemble members from a future-climate-model  
43 simulation<sup>16,17</sup> (see Methods) are examined to track the energy  
44 flow during the simulation where the net energy flux at the TOA  
45 from increasing greenhouse gases is about  $1\text{ W m}^{-2}$ , indicating a  
46 net energy surplus being directed into the climate system, mainly  
47 from decreases in outgoing long-wave radiation<sup>18</sup>. If there are  
48 time periods when globally averaged surface temperatures are not  
49 increasing, this excess energy must go elsewhere, either to heat the

50 atmosphere and land, to melt ice or snow, or to be deposited in the  
51 subsurface ocean and manifested as changes in ocean temperatures  
52 and thus heat content. Changes to the cryosphere and land  
53 subsurface play a much smaller role than the atmosphere and oceans  
54 in energy flows<sup>5</sup>, and they are not further considered in this paper.

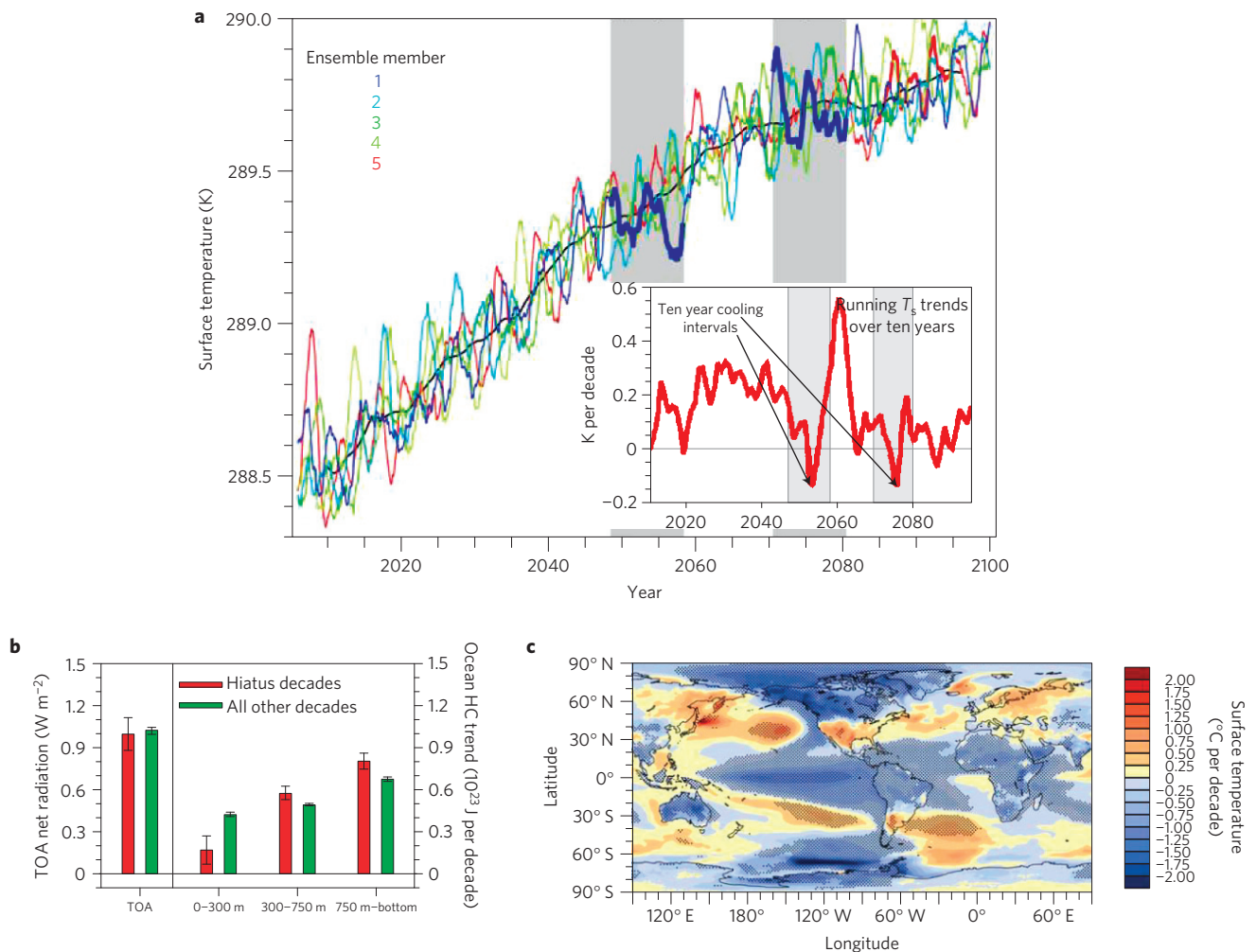
55 The time series of globally averaged surface temperature from  
56 all five climate-model simulations show some decades with little  
57 or no positive trend (Fig. 1a), as has occurred in observations  
58 (Supplementary Fig. S1 top). Running ten year linear trends of  
59 globally averaged surface temperature from the five model ensemble  
60 members reveal hiatus periods (Fig. 1a) comparable to observations  
61 (Supplementary Fig. S1 middle). Using the first ensemble member  
62 as an example, the overall warming averaged over the century is  
63 about  $+0.15\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  per decade. However, the decades centred around  
64 2020, 2054, 2065, 2070, and several decades late in the century  
65 show either near zero or slightly negative trends in that ensemble  
66 member. We choose two ten year periods in this ensemble member  
67 when the globally averaged surface temperature is negative, that  
68 is, less than  $-0.10\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  over the decade (Fig. 1a), and six similar  
69 periods that meet the same criterion from the other four ensemble  
70 members, to form an eight-member composite of hiatus periods.

71 The composite average net energy flux at the top of the  
72 atmosphere for the eight hiatus periods (left side of Fig. 1b) is  
73  $+1.00 [0.88, 1.11]\text{ W m}^{-2}$  (the positive sign convention indicates  
74 net energy flux into the system), where the values in square  
75 brackets are error bars defined as ( $\pm$  one standard error  $\times 1.86$ )  
76 to be consistent with a 5% significance level from a one-  
77 sided Student *t*-test (see Methods). This can be compared with  
78 the net energy flux averaged over all other 10 year running-  
79 average trends (numbering 435) in the five ensemble members  
80 of  $+1.02 [1.00, 1.04]\text{ W m}^{-2}$ . The larger sample reduces the error  
81 bars compared with the hiatus decades. The error bars overlap,  
82 indicating no significant difference between the eight members in  
83 the composite and all other ten year periods, which is equivalent  
84 to a significance calculation from a Student *t*-test (see Methods).  
85 Thus in all decades in all five ensemble members there is a  
86 radiative imbalance of roughly  $1\text{ W m}^{-2}$ . This is indicative of  
87 the ongoing increase in  $\text{CO}_2$  as well as in positive trends of  
88 globally averaged surface temperature that occur in most time  
89 periods of the twenty-first century in the model (Fig. 1a). So  
90 where is the energy gained by the climate system going during ten  
91 year time periods when the globally averaged surface-temperature  
92 trend is slightly negative?

93 As noted above, the most likely candidate is the deep ocean,  
94 and this is indeed the case for the model (Fig. 1b for global  
95 averages, and Supplementary Fig. S2 by basin). For the upper  
96 300 m layer, the composite global average heat-content trend  
97 for the eight decades with negative surface-temperature trend is  
98  $+0.17 [0.07, 0.27] \times 10^{23}\text{ J}$  per decade, a reduction of 60% compared

<sup>1</sup>National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder, Colorado, USA, <sup>2</sup>CAWCR, Bureau of Meteorology, Melbourne, Australia.

\*e-mail: meehl@ncar.ucar.edu; meehl@ucar.edu.



**Figure 1** **a**, Annual mean globally averaged surface temperature for the five climate-model ensemble members (coloured lines) and ensemble mean (black line), highlighting two ten-year negative-temperature-trend periods and ten-year running trends from this ensemble member (inset). **b**, Left: composite global linear trends for hiatus decades (red bars) and all other decades (green bars) for TOA net radiation (positive values denote net energy entering the system). Right: global ocean heat-content (HC) decadal trends ( $10^{23}$  J per decade) for the upper ocean (surface to 300 m) and two deeper ocean layers (300–750 m and 750 m–bottom), with error bars defined as  $\pm$  one standard error  $\times 1.86$  to be consistent with a 5% significance level from a one-sided Student *t*-test. **c**, Composite average SST linear trends for hiatus decades; stippling denotes 5% significance.

1 with the average trend over all decades for the five ensemble  
 2 members of  $+0.42 [0.41, 0.44] \times 10^{23}$  J per decade. Thus this layer  
 3 is still gaining heat, but at a much reduced rate during hiatus  
 4 periods compared with other decades. There is no overlap of the  
 5 error bars (Fig. 1b), indicating that there is a significant average  
 6 reduction of the upper-ocean heat-content trend in decades when  
 7 the surface-temperature trend is slightly negative.

8 However, in the deeper layers of the global ocean toward the  
 9 right-hand side of Fig. 1b, the heat-content trends for hiatus time  
 10 periods are greater than other decades, indicating that most of the  
 11 excess heat is going into these layers. For the 300–750 m layer the  
 12 composite global average is 18% larger ( $+0.58$  versus  $+0.49 \times 10^{23}$   
 13 J per decade), and for the layer below 750 m the composite global  
 14 average is 19% larger ( $+0.80 \times 10^{23}$  J per decade compared with  
 15  $+0.67 \times 10^{23}$  J per decade). The error-bar ranges do not overlap  
 16 for either layer in Fig. 1b, again indicating that these differences  
 17 are statistically significant. Thus, during decades of slightly negative  
 18 surface-temperature trend compared with other decades of positive  
 19 trend, the trends in global ocean heat content are significantly  
 20 reduced above 300 m, but significantly increased below 300 m,  
 21 indicating that more heat is being taken down into the deeper  
 22 ocean layers of the model.

Examination of ocean heat-content trends by basin (Supple- 23  
 24 mentary Fig. S2) indicates qualitatively similar results to the global  
 25 ocean, with decreases in heat-content trends above 300 m and  
 26 increases below 300 m for the hiatus periods compared with all  
 27 other periods. However, the significance of these changes suggests  
 28 that different processes are at work in the different basins. In  
 29 the Atlantic and Southern Oceans, there is a statistically signifi-  
 30 cant reduction of heat content in the upper 300 m ( $-80\%$  and  
 31  $-70\%$ , respectively). The changes in the 300–750 m layer are not  
 32 significant, but the trends in the layer below 750 m are statistically  
 33 significant ( $+15\%$  and  $+10\%$ , respectively), indicating that sig-  
 34 nificant excess heat is going deeper in those basins in the hiatus  
 35 periods. Meanwhile, for the Pacific basin, the increasing trends  
 36 in ocean heat content for the 300–750 m layer and below 750 m  
 37 are both statistically significant ( $+20\%$  and  $+34\%$ , respectively),  
 38 similar to the Indian Ocean ( $+66\%$  and  $+41\%$ , respectively). Thus,  
 39 in the Atlantic and Southern Oceans, there is significantly more  
 40 heat mixed into the deep ocean layer below 750 m, whereas in  
 41 the Pacific and Indian Oceans there is significantly more heat  
 42 being deposited in both the mid-ocean layer from 300 to 750 m  
 43 and the deep ocean layer below 750 m. This redistribution of heat  
 44 in the ocean is consistent in some ways with what happens on

1 shorter timescales during El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO;  
2 ref. 19). None of the changes in the Arctic basin are signifi-  
3 cant (not shown), and they are all much smaller than in the  
4 other basins in any case.

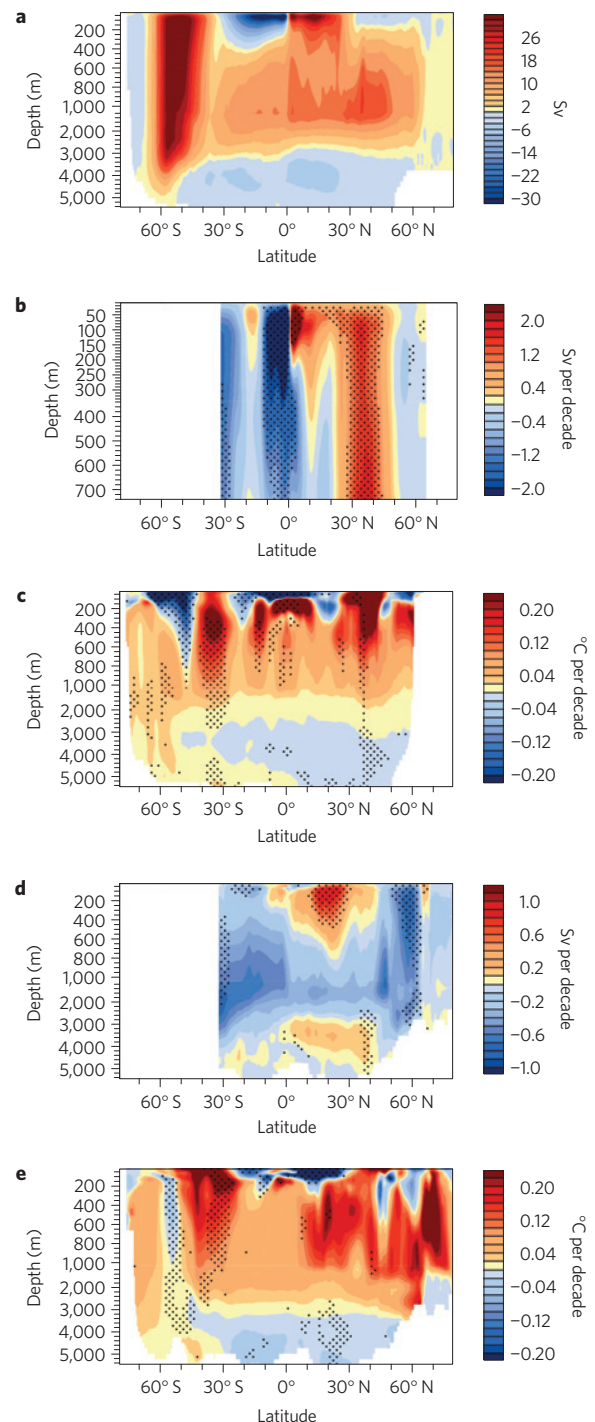
5 The eight hiatus periods are characterized by negative sea surface  
6 temperature (SST) trends in the tropical Pacific, and positive trends  
7 near 30° to 40° N and S latitude in the Pacific and Atlantic that are  
8 significant at the 5% level (Fig. 1c). This is similar to the observed  
9 pattern of SST trends for a composite of three hiatus periods since  
10 the 1970s (Supplementary Fig. S1 bottom), and to the pattern seen  
11 in another modelling study<sup>12</sup>.

12 This pattern resembles the La Niña-like negative phase of the  
13 Interdecadal Pacific Oscillation<sup>20</sup> that has been attributed to a  
14 coupled air–sea tropical-midlatitude mechanism that internally  
15 generates decadal timescale variability<sup>21</sup>. The patterns throughout  
16 the tropical and subtropical Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans  
17 also bear a resemblance to a positive Southern Oscillation  
18 (La Niña) pattern<sup>22</sup>.

19 The geographic structure of ocean heat-content changes is  
20 denoted by regions where the 20 °C isotherm is deeper during hiatus  
21 periods (positive values in Supplementary Fig. S3), indicating that  
22 heat may be taken down into the subsurface ocean in these regions.  
23 These areas occur near 30° S and 30° N in the Pacific and around  
24 35°–40° N in the Atlantic in regions where there are positive SST  
25 trend values (Fig. 1c). Furthermore, stronger trade winds in the  
26 Pacific (not shown) are associated with the negative SST trends in  
27 the eastern equatorial Pacific, as well as convergence in the western  
28 tropical Pacific where warmer water is forced deeper, as indicated by  
29 positive values of the anomalies of the 20 °C isotherm there.

30 The anomalous positive trend values of the depths of the  
31 20 °C isotherm are suggestive of areas where there is convergence  
32 of warm surface waters, which then force heat downwards into the  
33 deeper ocean. The meridional overturning stream function and  
34 associated anomalies are useful in diagnosing such patterns  
35 of subsurface ocean warming. The subtropical cells, which are  
36 particularly robust in the Pacific<sup>23</sup>, are shown by the largest  
37 opposite-sign meridional stream-function values above about  
38 700 m between roughly 35° N and S with upward flow near  
39 the equator, and convergence and downward flow near 35° N  
40 and 35° S (Fig. 2a). The meridional overturning circulation in  
41 the Atlantic is illustrated in this global zonal-mean plot as  
42 greatest positive values near about 40° N at 1,000 m depth and  
43 sinking north of about 45° N. The Ekman divergence in the  
44 Southern Ocean near 60° S is shown by maximum positive  
45 values centred near 50° S, whereas the Antarctic Bottom Water  
46 formation is represented by negative values poleward of about  
47 65° S, and negative values below about 3,000 m that extend into the  
48 Northern Hemisphere.

49 The meridional overturning stream function averaged over  
50 the Pacific basin for the layer above about 700 m (Fig. 2b)  
51 shows significant positive trend values from about the equator  
52 to 40° N, and mostly negative values from near the equator  
53 to about 35° S. Such a pattern is indicative of an anomalous  
54 strengthening of the subtropical cells in the Pacific during hiatus  
55 periods. This produces stronger upward vertical motion near the  
56 equator, bringing more cool water to the surface there (negative  
57 decadal temperature trends near the equator above about 200  
58 m in Fig. 2c), and greater convergence near the subtropics of  
59 each hemisphere that takes warm water downward (for example,  
60 positive decadal temperature trends from about 30° to 45° N,  
61 and south of 30° S in Fig. 2c). This is consistent with negative  
62 SST trends in the equatorial Pacific, and positive SST trends  
63 for hiatus decades near 35° to 40° N and S (Fig. 1c). There  
64 is mostly small-amplitude warming south of 60° S (Fig. 2c),  
65 indicative of a weakening of the Antarctic Bottom Water formation.  
66 The bottom-intensified warming that extends north to about



**Figure 2** | **a**, Zonal-mean global long-term-average ocean meridional overturning stream function from the model; positive stream-function contours indicate clockwise flow, negative anticlockwise. **b**, Composite decadal trends of meridional overturning stream function for the upper Pacific Ocean for hiatus periods (note the different vertical scale from **a**; there are no values plotted south of about 35° S owing to the open Pacific basin at those latitudes). **c** The same as **b** except for zonal-mean temperature trends for the Pacific Ocean. **d** The same as **b** except for meridional overturning stream function for the Atlantic Ocean. **e** The same as **b** except for zonal-mean temperature trends for the Atlantic Ocean. Stippling denotes 5% significance.

30° S in the Atlantic (Fig. 2e) and to about the equator in the Pacific (Fig. 2c) is also indicative of a weakening of Antarctic



1 Bottom Water formation. This warming at depth is noted in  
2 the Southern Ocean basin in the model (Supplementary Fig. S2)  
3 and in observations<sup>24,25</sup>.

4 In the Atlantic (Fig. 2d), the composite trends in meridional  
5 stream function for hiatus decades show positive (negative) trends  
6 in the tropical–subtropical North (South) Atlantic in the top few  
7 hundred metres, indicating a similar change to that in the Pacific,  
8 with a strengthening of the subtropical cell leading to a subsurface  
9 warming (Fig. 2e). In the North Atlantic, the composite stream  
10 function shows a mostly negative trend, implying a weakening of  
11 the deep convection there. As the deep convection weakens, less  
12 winter surface cold water moves downward, and indirectly induces  
13 a warming effect in the subsurface and deep ocean in the Atlantic<sup>26</sup>.

14 The model provides a plausible depiction of climate-system  
15 processes that can cause hiatus periods due to internally generated  
16 decadal timescale variability, such as increased subtropical thermo-  
17 cline ventilation in the Pacific and Atlantic (implying increased  
18 lower-thermocline heat uptake), and weakened convective mixing  
19 in the North Atlantic and Southern Ocean (implying decreased  
20 deep-ocean heat loss). Therefore, a hiatus period is a relatively  
21 common climate phenomenon even during periods with a sustained  
22 radiative imbalance at the TOA of  $1 \text{ W m}^{-2}$ . Thus, a hiatus  
23 period is consistent with our physical picture of how the climate  
24 system works, and does not invalidate our basic understanding  
25 of greenhouse-gas-induced warming or the models used to simulate  
26 such warming.

27 Tracing changes in global deep-ocean heat content indicated by  
28 the model results would require better observed ocean heat-content  
29 analyses. In particular, observations of deep-ocean temperatures,  
30 which are not generally available now but are planned under  
31 Argo, also limit our ability to accurately calculate the sea-level  
32 rise contribution due to thermal expansion that depends on  
33 ocean heat-content changes<sup>27</sup>. Whether the processes noted here  
34 are intrinsically linked through phenomena such as ENSO-like  
35 or Interdecadal Pacific Oscillation teleconnections (for example  
36 changes in Antarctic Bottom Water formation have been linked  
37 to ENSO; ref. 28), or whether it is a coincidence that the oceans  
38 change together to play a role in creating the hiatus periods,  
39 warrants further exploration.

## 40 Methods

41 The climate model analysed here is the Community Climate System Model version  
42 4 (CCSM4), a global coupled climate model with an approximate  $1^\circ$  horizontal  
43 resolution, and 26 levels in the atmosphere, coupled to a  $1^\circ$  (down to  $1/4^\circ$  in the  
44 equatorial tropics), 60-level ocean, and state-of-the-art sea-ice and land-surface  
45 schemes<sup>16</sup>. Five ensemble members from a future-climate simulation of CCSM4  
46 run under the RCP4.5 scenario<sup>17</sup> are analysed. Although the  $\text{CO}_2$  concentrations  
47 in the RCP4.5 scenario are beginning to level out near the end of the twenty-first  
48 century<sup>17,29</sup>, the globally averaged surface temperatures are still increasing (Fig. 1a),  
49 partly owing to the increasing  $\text{CO}_2$  concentrations, and partly owing to further  
50 warming from climate change commitment<sup>30</sup>. We choose RCP4.5 because it is  
51 the scenario that has  $\text{CO}_2$  increasing at a moderate enough rate that internally  
52 generated decadal timescale variability can occasionally offset the forced warming  
53 and produce 10 year periods when the surface-temperature trend is slightly  
54 negative. Greater increases in  $\text{CO}_2$  concentration for the higher-forcing scenario  
55 RCP8.5 in the model, for example, do not produce such periods. We examine  
56 a future-climate scenario rather than twentieth-century simulations because  
57 the latter have combinations of natural and anthropogenic forcings that can  
58 produce externally forced periods of little energy imbalance and decreased global  
59 warming in certain time periods during the first part of the century<sup>17</sup>. For the time  
60 periods from the 1970s up to the present when most of the warming has been  
61 anthropogenic in the model<sup>17</sup> there are only four decades to sample. Thus in the  
62 future-climate simulations there are many more possible hiatus decades during  
63 which the anthropogenic forcing is dominant and ongoing.

64 Non-overlapping error bars, defined as  $(\pm 1.86 \times \text{standard error})$ , are used  
65 as a graphical illustration (in Fig. 1b and Supplementary Fig. S1) of statistical  
66 significance at the 5% level. In addition to the formal  $t$ -test based on the difference  
67 between two means, we can show that non-overlapping error bars defined as  
68 above imply rejection of the null hypothesis in the one-sided formal  $t$ -test.  
69 Define  $X_2$  and  $X_1$  as the two mean quantities computed from the two sets of  
70  $n = 5$  ensemble members.

70 Define standard error,  $S_1 \equiv \sqrt{S_1^2} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (x_{1i} - X_1)^2}{n-1}}$  where  $i$  runs from 1 to  $n$ ,  
71 and similarly define  $S_2$ .

72 Consider the case when  $X_2 > X_1$ , consistent with our expectations of a warmer  
73 ocean, and thus the use of the one-sided  $t$ -test. The non-overlapping error bar  
74 criterion says that  $X_2$  and  $X_1$  are significantly different because

$$75 \quad X_2 - 1.86S_2 > X_1 + 1.86S_1$$

76 This can be written as

$$77 \quad X_2 - X_1 > 1.86(S_1 + S_2) \quad (1)$$

78 By the definition of  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , because

$$79 \quad S_1 + S_2 \geq \sqrt{S_1^2 + S_2^2}$$

80 we can say that (1) implies

$$81 \quad X_2 - X_1 \geq 1.86\sqrt{S_1^2 + S_2^2}$$

82 which implies rejection of the null hypothesis in a one-sided  $t$ -test at the 5% level,  
83 because the 95% quantile of a Student  $t$ -test with eight degrees of freedom is 1.86.

84 The statistical significance of the surface-temperature trends (Fig. 1c) is  
85 computed from a two-sided Student  $t$ -test (used here because we have no  
86 expectation of the sign of the SST trend change) of the hiatus trends compared  
87 with 435 possible decadal trends across the two ensemble members, with an  
88 equivalent sample size, taking into account autocorrelation, of 45 degrees of  
89 freedom; similar values are returned when both including and excluding the  
90 hiatus trend periods in the larger sample. This methodology is applied to all  $t$ -test  
91 calculations in this paper.

92 To calculate the ocean meridional overturning stream function for the  
93 Pacific basin north of about  $30^\circ \text{ S}$ , we subtract the Indonesian Throughflow  
94 ( $12.6 \text{ Sv}$  in CCSM4) from the Pacific basin calculation and add this value  
95 to the Indian basin.

96 Received 16 June 2011; accepted 30 August 2011; published online  
97 XX Month XXXX

## 98 References

- 99 1. Easterling, D. R. & Wehner, M. F. Is the climate warming or cooling?  
100 *Geophys. Res. Lett.* **36**, L08706 (2009).
- 101 2. Hansen, J. *et al.* Earth's energy imbalance: Confirmation and implications.  
102 *Science* **308**, 1431–1435 (2005).
- 103 3. Trenberth, K. E., Fasullo, J. T. & Kiehl, J. Earth's global energy budget.  
104 *Bull. Am. Meteorol. Soc.* **90**, 311–323 (2009).
- 105 4. Trenberth, K. E. An imperative for climate change planning: Tracking Earth's  
106 global energy. *Curr. Opin. Environ. Sustain.* **1**, 19–27 (2009).
- 107 5. Trenberth, K. E. & Fasullo, J. T. Tracking Earth's energy. *Science* **328**,  
108 316–317 (2010).
- 109 6. Levitus, S. *et al.* Global ocean heat content 1955–2008 in light of recently  
110 revealed instrumentation problems. *Geophys. Res. Lett.* **36**, L07608 (2009).
- 111 7. Lyman, J. M. *et al.* Robust warming of the global upper ocean. *Nature* **465**,  
112 334–337 (2010).
- 113 8. Santer, B. D. *et al.* Separating signal and noise in atmospheric temperature  
114 changes: The importance of timescale. *J. Geophys. Res.* (2011, in the press).
- 115 9. Solomon, S. *et al.* Contributions of stratospheric water vapor to decadal  
116 changes in the rate of global warming. *Science* **327**, 1219–1223 (2010).
- 117 10. Solomon, S. *et al.* The persistently variable 'background' stratospheric aerosol  
118 layer and global climate change. *Science* **333**, 866 (2011).
- 119 11. Kaufmann, R. K., Kauppi, H., Mann, M. L. & Stock, J. H. Reconciling  
120 anthropogenic climate change with observed temperature 1998–2008. *Proc.*  
121 *Natl Acad. Sci. USA* **108**, 11790–11793 (2011).
- 122 12. Katsman, C. A. & van Oldenborgh, G. J. Tracing the upper ocean's 'missing  
123 heat'. *Geophys. Res. Lett.* **38**, L14610 (2011).
- 124 13. Purkey, S. G. & Johnson, G. C. Warming of global abyssal and deep Southern  
125 Ocean waters between the 1990s and 2000s: Contributions to global heat and  
126 sea level rise budgets. *J. Clim.* **23**, 6336–6351 (2010).
- 127 14. Song, Y. T. & Colberg, R. Deep ocean warming assessed from altimeters, gravity  
128 recovery and climate experiment, *in situ* measurements, and a non-Boussinesq  
129 ocean general circulation model. *J. Geophys. Res.* **116**, C02020 (2011).
- 130 15. Palmer, M. D., McNeall, D. J. & Dunstone, N. J. Importance of the deep ocean  
131 for estimating decadal changes in Earth's radiation. *Geophys. Res. Lett.* **38**,  
132 L13707 (2011).
- 133 16. Gent, P. *et al.* The Community Climate System Model Version 4. *J. Clim.*  
134 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1175/2011JCLI4083.1> (2011).
- 135 17. Meehl, G. A. *et al.* Climate system response to external forcings and climate  
136 change projections in CCSM4. *J. Clim.* (2011, in the press).

- 1 18. Trenberth, K. E. & Fasullo, J. T. Global warming due to  
2 increasing absorbed solar radiation. *Geophys. Res. Lett.*  
3 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1029/2009GL037527> (2009).
- 4 19. Roemmich, D. & Gilson, J. The global ocean imprint of ENSO.  
5 *Geophys. Res. Lett.* **38**, L13606 (2011).
- 6 20. Power, S., Casey, T., Folland, C., Colman, A. & Mehta, V. Interdecadal  
7 modulation of the impact of ENSO on Australia. *Clim. Dyn.* **15**, 319–324 (1999).
- 8 21. Meehl, G. A. & Hu, A. Megadroughts in the Indian monsoon region and  
9 southwest North America and a mechanism for associated multi-decadal  
10 Pacific sea surface temperature anomalies. *J. Clim.* **19**, 1605–1623 (2006).
- 11 22. Trenberth, K. E. & Caron, J. M. The Southern Oscillation revisited:  
12 Sea level pressures, surface temperatures and precipitation. *J. Clim.* **13**,  
13 4358–4365 (2000).
- 14 23. McPhaden, M. J. & Zhang, D. Slowdown of the meridional overturning  
15 circulation in the upper Pacific Ocean. *Nature* **415**, 603–608 (2002).
- 16 24. Kawano, T. *et al.* Bottom water warming along the pathway of lower  
17 circumpolar deep water in the Pacific Ocean. *Geophys. Res. Lett.* **33**,  
18 L23613 (2006).
- 19 25. Johnson, G. C. & Doney, S. C. Recent western South Atlantic bottom water  
20 warming. *Geophys. Res. Lett.* **33**, L14614 (2006).
- 21 26. Brady, E. C. & Otto-Bliesner, B. L. The role of meltwater-induced  
22 subsurface ocean warming in regulating the Atlantic meridional  
23 overturning in glacial climate simulations. *Clim. Dyn.*  
24 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s00382-010-0925-9> (2011).
- 25 27. Church, J. A. *et al.* Revisiting the Earth's sea-level and energy budgets from  
26 1961 to 2008. *Geophys. Res. Lett.* **38** (2011, in the press).
- 27 28. McKee, D. C., Yuan, X., Gordon, A. L., Huber, B. A. & Dong, Z. Climate impact  
28 on interannual variability of Weddell Sea Bottom Water. *J. Geophys. Res.* **116**,  
29 C05020 (2011).
- 30 29. Moss, R. *et al.* A new approach to scenario development for the IPCC Fifth  
31 Assessment Report. *Nature* **463**, 747–756 (2010).
- 32 30. Meehl, G. A. *et al.* How much more global warming and sea level rise? *Science*  
33 **307**, 1769–1772 (2005).

### Acknowledgements

We thank C. Tebaldi for her contributions to the statistical-significance calculations. Portions of this study were supported by the Office of Science (BER), US Department of Energy, Cooperative Agreement No DE-FC02-97ER62402, by the National Science Foundation and by NASA grant NNX09AH89G. The National Center for Atmospheric Research is sponsored by the National Science Foundation.

### Author contributions

G.A.M., J.M.A., J.T.F., A.H. and K.E.T. contributed to model data analysis. G.A.M., J.M.A., J.T.F., A.H. and K.E.T. contributed to writing the paper. All authors discussed the results and commented on the manuscript.

### Additional information

The authors declare no competing financial interests. Supplementary information accompanies this paper on [www.nature.com/natureclimatechange](http://www.nature.com/natureclimatechange). Reprints and permissions information is available online at <http://www.nature.com/reprints>. Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to G.A.M.

## **Page 1**

---

*Query 1: Line no. 1*

Please note that title has been edited as per journal style. OK?

*Query 2: Line no. 29*

As per journal style, reference citations should be in numerical order. Therefore references are renumbered from here onwards. OK?

*Query 3: Line no. 49*

Please check the e-mail address is OK as given.

*Query 4: Line no. 49*

Please provide post codes for all affiliations.

## **Page 2**

---

*Query 5: Line no. 1*

Please provide short titles for Figs 1 and 2. Please check y-axis label for fig. 1a.

## **Page 4**

---

*Query 6: Line no. 112*

Any update for refs 8, 17, 27?

*Query 7: Line no. 116*

Please provide page range for ref. 10.

*Query 8: Line no. 132*

Please provide volume and page range/article id for refs 16, 18, 26.

## **Page 5**

---

*Query 9: Line no. 29*

Please confirm the page range given for ref. 29.