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Global temperature and hydroclimate in warmer climates of the past and future: the Last Interglacial versus greenhouse scenarios

Paolo Scussolini¹, Pepijn Bakker², Paolo De Luca¹, Dim Coumou¹, Joyce Bosmans³, Gerrit Lohmann⁴, Zoë Thomas⁵, Chris Turney⁵, Laurie Menviel⁶, Takashi Obase⁷, Ayako Abe-Ouchi⁷, Pascale Braconnot⁸, Bette Otto-Bliesner⁹, Qiuzhen Yin¹⁰, Matthias Prange¹¹, Chronis Tzedakis¹², Emilie Capron¹³, Hans Renssen¹⁴, Philip Ward¹, and Jeroen Aerts¹

¹Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Institute for Environmental Studies, Water and Climate Risk, Amsterdam, Netherlands (paolo.scussolini@vu.nl)

²Earth and Climate Cluster, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

³Department of Environmental Sciences, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

⁴Alfred Wegener Institute - Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research, Bremerhaven, Germany

⁵Earth and Sustainability Science Research Centre, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

⁶Climate Change Research Centre, ARC Centre of Excellence for Climate Extremes, The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

⁷Atmosphere and Ocean Research Institute, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan

⁸Laboratoire des Sciences du Climat et de l'Environnement, Université Paris-Saclay, Gif-sur-Yvette, France

⁹National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder (CO),

¹⁰Earth and Life Institute, Georges Lemaitre Center for Earth and Climate Research, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

¹¹MARUM – Center for Marine Environmental Sciences, University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany

¹²Environmental Change Research Centre, Department of Geography, University College London, London, UK

¹³Physics of Ice, Climate and Earth, Niels Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

¹⁴Department of Natural Sciences and Environmental Health, University of South-Eastern Norway, Bø, Norway.

Past climates contain precious information about the workings of the climate system, and about what can be expected in a changed climate. The Last Interglacial (LIG; ca. 125,000 years ago) is the most recent period of climate warmer than modern, at least in the Northern Hemisphere. Because of this, it has been often proposed that the LIG holds a partial analogy with a future warmer climate forced by enhanced greenhouse effect. Still, such analogy has never been examined in a quantitative manner. Here we address the question: for which scenario, time horizon, regions and season is the climate of the LIG a useful analogue of the future? We use the results of 13 climate models that performed the standard experiments of PMIP4 and CMIP6, and present a comparison of hemispheric temperature and precipitation between the LIG and SSP scenarios of the future. We also two independent assessments of models performance, by comparing their temperature and precipitation to climate reanalysis of the last decades and to proxies of the LIG. Insights gained from this comparison can inform studies in disciplines beyond climate studies, such as hydrology and ecology.

