Supplementary Information for

Pathways of China's PM2.5 air quality 2015-2060 in the context of carbon neutrality

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Supplementary Information Text

 Supplementary Note 1. **Rationale and definition of scenario ensembles.** A subset of six scenarios (*Baseline*, *Current-goals*, *Ambitious-pollution-NDC-goals*, *Ambitious-pollution-2℃-goals*, *Ambitious- pollution-Neutral-goals*, and *Ambitious-pollution-1.5℃-goals*) are designed to dynamically project China's future emission and air quality pathways. The combinations of different SSP and RCP scenarios (i.e. SSP1- 26, SSP2-45, SSP4-60) are selected according to the Scenario Model Intercomparison Project (ScenarioMIP) 7 for CMIP6¹. O'Neill et al describe ScenarioMIP's objectives, experimental design, and its relation to other 8 activities within CMIP6 in detail¹. In summary, O'Neill choose an SSP for each global average forcing pathway by taking into consideration of the possibility that the sensitivity of climate outcomes to SSP choice may be larger than anticipated. To account for that possibility, choices were based on one or, when compatible, more of the following goals: facilitate climate research; minimize differences in climate; and ensure consistency with scenarios that are most relevant to the IAM/IAV communities. Therefore, an experimental design has been identified consisting of eight alternative 21st century scenarios (i.e. SSP5-8.5, SSP3-7.0, SSP2-4.5, SSP1-2.6, SSP4-6.0, SSP4-3.4, SSP5-3.4-OS, SSPa-b) plus one large initial condition ensemble (SSP3-7.0) and a set of long-term extensions (SSP5-8.5-Ext, SSP5-3.4-OS-Ext, and SSP1-2.6-Ext), divided into two tiers defined by relative priority. Therefore, given the purpose of this study and China's current development mode, we select SSP4-6.0 as the baseline climate scenario, SSP2-45 as the NDC- consistent scenario, SSP1-26 as the global 2℃ limits-consistent scenario, SSP1-19 as the global global 1.5℃ limits-consistent scenario.

 Baseline represents the reference of the study, which includes China's enacted clean air actions before 2015. Following an inequal global developing mode, economic growth is much slower and results in limited climate policies and clean air actions. Simulations of *Baseline* could elucidate the possible deterioration of future air qualities without any restriction of fossil fuels or pollution control.

 Current-goals is designed with current released and upcoming climate target (i.e. the National Determined Contributions (NDC) target) and environmental policies (Table S1). For environment policies, this scenario incorporates all of China's released and upcoming air pollution control policies, and these policies would also be enhanced during 2020–2030 in terms of national air quality goals of building 'a beautiful China'. Besides, regional air pollution control diversities are also fully considered according to China's latest clean air actions, that three key regions, namely the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei and surroundings (BTHS), the Fenwei Plain (FWP) and the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) are highlighted in this scenario. *Current-goals* represents a 31 middle and policy-continued developing mode, whose simulation results could indicate future ambient PM_{2.5} variations under all the current policies.

 Ambitious-pollution-NDC-goals shares the same energy inputs with *Current-goals*, but would maximumly adopt highly-developed end-of-pipe control technologies by 2050, and implement consistently during 2050- 2060. End-of-pipe pollution control policies in this scenario present the best available air pollution control process in China. From 2015 to 2030, the strictest clean air process in the BTHS region would be deployed all over China; while during 2030–2050, the best available end-of-pipe control and combustion/production technologies would be gradually penetrated in all sectors; and then, these best technologies would be continued to operate during 2050-2060 (Table S1). Simulation results of *Ambitious-pollution-NDC-goals* help to reveal whether China could achieve ultimate air quality improvements through current energy transitions along with the strictest pollution control measures.

 *Ambitious-pollution-Neutral-goals*is designed under the context of carbon neutrality commitment released by China's government, that China aspires to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Rigorous low-carbon energy transitions would be rapidly deployed to ensure the zero carbon emissions in China by 2060. Meanwhile, it combinesthe best available pollution control technologies (Table S1), and assumesthe social economy would develop sustainably at a reasonably high pace (i.e. the SSP1 sustainable pathway).

 Ambitious-pollution-2℃-goals and *Ambitious-pollution-1.5℃-goals* scenarios are further designed to better understand the role and the impacts of China's carbon neutrality goals, which are consistent with the global 2℃ and 1.5℃ temperature rising limits, respectively; and they share the same pollution control and socioeconomic development with *Ambitious-pollution-Neutral-goals*. Together with the *Ambitious- pollution-Neutral-goals* scenario, these three strict low-carbon scenarios manifest China's future PM2.5 air quality under the strictest carbon and pollution co-control pathways. Besides, it is also informative for China's air quality co-benefit potentials under the national carbon-zero-adapted and the global 2℃-/1.5℃- consistent energy optimizations.

 Supplementary Note 2. **Configurations of WRF-CMAQ modeling system.** In this work, we use the Weather Research and Forecasting Version 3.9.1 (WRFv3.9.1) and the Community Multiscale Air Quality Version 5.2.1 (CMAQv5.2.1) to establish the air quality modelling system for China mainland. WRF and CMAQ model provide the meteorological conditions and pollutant concentrations respectively. The 59 horizontal domain covers the mainland of China with a resolution of 36 km \times 36 km. The vertical resolution is designed as 23 sigma levels from surface to tropopause (about 100 mb) for WRF simulation (with 10 layers below 3-km), and then these 23 sigma levels are collapsed into 14 sigma levels (1.000, 0.995, 0.988, 0.980, 0.970, 0.956, 0.938, 0.893, 0.839, 0.777, 0.702, 0.582, 0.400, 0.200 and 0.000) for CMAQ model.

63 We choose the New Goddard shortwave radiation scheme², RRTM^3 longwave radiation scheme, the Kain-Fritsch cloud parameterization⁴ (version 2), the ACM2 PBL scheme⁵, the Pleim-Xiu land-surface scheme⁶ and WSM6 cloud microphysics for WRF simulation; and adopt the Analysis nudging, observational nudging, soil nudging to improve the modelling fidelity. The surface roughness is corrected by increasing the friction velocity by 1.5 times to reduce the high biases in wind speed⁷. We apply the CB05 gas-phase and AERO6 particulate matter chemical mechanisms for CMAQ modelling. The meteorological initial and boundary conditions are derived from the final analysis data (FNL). The chemical initial and boundary conditions are interpolated from the dynamic outputs of GEOS-Chem model, which are driven by future gridded CMIP6 emissions. All the simulations are conducted throughout the whole year and with a one-month spin-up.

 For emission inputs, we utilize the time factors (i.e. monthly, daily, hourly), spatial and species (including both particulate matter and volatile organic compounds) proxies of the MEIC model (Multiresolution 74 Emission Inventory for China)⁸ to transform DPEC-derived China's future anthropogenic emissions into CMAQ-required formats. Global emissions (except for China) are derived from the gridded global CMIP6 76 emission datasets⁹. For other natural source emissions, biogenic emissions are simulated with the Model of 77 Emission of Gases and Aerosols from Nature (MEGAN v2.1)¹⁰; sea-salt and dust emissions are calculated online in the CMAQ model; open fire burning emissions are obtained from the fourth-generation global fire 79 emissions database $(GFED4)^{11}$.

 Our study contains two parts of experiments, namely core scenario and sensitivity simulations. In core scenario simulations, meteorological conditions and natural emissions are fixed as 2015 level; future anthropogenic emissions of China and other countries under the scenario ensembles are derived from DPEC model and CMIP6 emission database respectively. We design two sets of sensitivity simulations to quantify the potential impacts of meteorology change and global pollution transports on future China's PM2.5 evolutions. Taking *Ambitious-pollution-2℃-goals* as the criterion, we fix China's anthropogenic emissions under *Ambitious-pollution-2℃-goals* in all sensitivity simulations. For meteorology change, we simulate China's future air quality with the meteorology from 2000 to 2018, and then quantify its impacts by comparing the results of emission-fixed, meteorology-varied simulations with the core *Ambitious-pollution- 2℃-goals* (2015-meteorology) simulation. For pollution transports, we vary the chemical boundary and global future emissions with SSP1-19 (the lowest emissions) and SSP3-70 (the highest emissions) CMIP6

scenarios. We then quantify the transport impacts by comparing the results of China emission-fixed, global

- emission and chemical boundary-varied simulations with the core *Ambitious-pollution-2℃-goals* simulation. Emission, meteorology, and chemical boundary configurations of all simulations are summarized in Table
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- 94 S5. We collect the hourly observed $PM_{2.5}$ concentration data from 1664 national observation monitors (China 95 Environmental Monitor Center), and evaluate our base-year annual mean $PM_{2.5}$ simulations by grids (Fig.

96 S9). The comparisons generally show good agreements of annual mean $PM_{2.5}$ simulations and observations.

 Supplementary Note 3. **Uncertainties and limitations.** The projected China's future PM2.5 exposures in this study are subjected to several uncertainties in each model and step.

99 First, the base-year (i.e. 2015) $PM_{2.5}$ exposure estimates are uncertain due to the multiple inputs, limited 100 temporal and spatial coverage of monitor sites^{12,13}. These uncertainties have been evaluated in previous 101 studies, that the relative prediction error of annual mean $PM_{2.5}$ exposure is within 17%, and the mean bias is 1.61 μ g/m³. The annually iterated cross-validation correlation coefficient with the in-situ observations is high 103 as 0.749, also showing the good agreements^{12,13}. This dataset might be the best-available PM_{2.5} estimates over China with complete spatiotemporal coverage.

105 Secondly, the WRF-CMAQ modelling system would induce inherent uncertainties on ambient PM_{2.5} concentration simulations, especially the simulated response of PM2.5 concentrations to the emission 107 reductions^{14,15}, which exists uncertainties on the future $PM_{2.5}$ exposure projections under different mitigation pathways. It is largely because of the incomplete understanding of the chemical formulations, products, rate 109 coefficients, and reaction kinetics¹⁶. We evaluate our base-year simulations with the hourly observed $PM_{2.5}$ concentration data from China Environmental Monitor Center. The comparisons show good agreements of the PM2.5 simulations and observations, that the average correlation coefficient of all monitor sites is high as 0.79 (Fig. S9), the average normalized mean bias (NMB) and normalized mean error (NME) are 8.5% and 31.4% respectively, well inside the recommended criteria for PM2.5 photochemical model performance 114 statistics (NMB<±30%, NME<50%, R>0.40)¹⁷. Besides, the pollution mitigation response to the emission 115 reductions have been well simulated in our previous studies, and the simulated $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations and 116 compositions can well capture the relevant observation changes^{18,19}.

117 Third, meteorology fluctuations²⁰ and global pollution transports²¹ would influence the degree of China's future air quality improvements. Employing the meteorology of last two decades (Table S5), we find that the 119 meteorology impacts are relatively small on China's future $PM_{2.5}$ exposure evaluations, with the fluctuation margin of -7% – 6% under *Ambitious-pollution-2℃-goals* pathway (Fig. S11). As for the global pollution 121 transports, we find their impacts on China's future PM_{2.5} exposure are also marginal, with the relative influences of -2%–6% and -1%–5% in 2030 and 2060 under *Ambitious-pollution-2℃-goals* pathway respectively.

 Fourth, carbon neutrality goals could be fulfilled by different energy pathways which lead to different air pollutant emission levels. In this work, we only demonstrate the air quality benefit from one specific carbon neutrality pathway, and more comprehensive analysis with different pathways should be investigated in the future.

 Our estimations are also subject to some limitations. On the one hand, the three air pollution scenarios are designed with existing knowledge of China's localized environmental policies and best-available technologies. Future technical innovation targeted end-pipe emissions are not included in our analysis. The unpredictable technical innovation on end-pipe pollution control, especially for non-energy related sources (i.e. agriculture, solvent use), might also profoundly benefit future air quality. On the other hand, future 133 variations of meteorology²²⁻²⁵ and natural source emissions²⁶⁻²⁹ induced by climate change remain highly uncertain, but are not considered in this study, that they are fixed in the 2015 level in core simulations (Table S5). Several studies have demonstrated future meteorological conditions are likely to deteriorate air pollution 136 through intense extreme events, enhanced thermal stability and the Arctic sea ice melting²²⁻²⁵. For example,

- 137 meteorology under the RCP4.5 climate pathway would increase China's population-weighted PM2.5
- 138 concentrations by 3% in 2050²³. In response to future climate and land cover change, previous studies
- 139 concluded the natural dust loading would vary from $-19\% 9\%$ (vs. modern natural emissions) globally²⁶; and
- 140 the biogenic VOC emissions in China would increase by 11.13% and 25.20% under RCP4.5 and RCP8.5
- 141 climate scenarios respectively in 2050²⁹. Our simulation shows the natural source emissions contribute \sim 3.0
- 142 μ g/m³ to China's population-weighted PM_{2.5} concentrations in 2015. However, as the significant air quality
- 143 improvements will be achieved from the anthropogenic emission reductions under the ambitious co-control
- 144 pathways, the role of natural sources in total PM_{2.5} exposure will be more highlighted. And given these
- 145 climate change-induced natural emissions and meteorological conditions might exacerbate $PM_{2.5}$ exposure
- 146 in the future, more mitigation efforts are needed to better protect public health.

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Fig. S1. The methodology framework.

Fig. S2. Future energy evolutions under different scenarios during 2015-2060. (a) Electricity generation pathways. (B) Industry final energy transitions. (c) Residential final energy transitions. (d) Transportation final energy transitions.

Fig. S3. Future anthropogenic emission (including SO₂, NO_x, PM_{2.5}, NMVOC, NH₃) pathways under different scenarios. The stacking histograms represent the emission fractions by sectors (left Y-axis), and the black lines with circle labels represent the emission magnitudes (right Y-axis).

Fig. S4. Sectoral CO₂ emissions over China under different scenarios during 2015-2060.

Fig. S5. Sectoral CO₂ emissions (including the positive CO₂ emissions from power, industry, transportation, residential sectors, absorbed positive CO₂ emissions by carbon capture and storage technologies, and negative CO² emissions by biological negative carbon emission technologies) over China under different scenarios in 2060.

Fig. S6. Accumulated PM_{2.5} exposure by $0.1^\circ \times 0.1^\circ$ grid in 2015 (ranked from low to high, coloured by region). The horizontal grey dashed lines represent the national ambient air quality standards (i.e. 35 μ g/m³) and WHO Air Quality Guideline (i.e. $10 \mu g/m^3$).

Fig. S7. Regional disparities of future PM2.5 exposure and energy evolutions in 2030. (a)-(f), Accumulated $PM_{2.5}$ exposure by $0.1^\circ \times 0.1^\circ$ grid in 2060 under different scenarios (ranked from low to high, coloured by region). The horizontal grey dashed lines represent the national ambient air quality standards (i.e. 35 μ g/m³) and WHO Air Quality Guideline (i.e. 10 μ g/m³). (g) National and regional population-weighted mean PM_{2.5} concentrations in 2030. (h) Fossil fuel fraction in primary energy mix in 2030.

Fig. S8. City fractions of annual mean PM_{2.5} concentrations below the national ambient air quality standards (i.e. 35 μ g/m³) and WHO Air Quality Guideline (i.e. 10 μ g/m³) in 2030 (a) and 2060 (b) under different scenarios.

Fig. S9. Comparisons of the base-year (i.e. 2015) simulated and observed PM_{2.5} concentrations (grid-based) over China. The solid line indicates the 1 : 1 line; while the dashed lines indicate the 1 : 2 and 2 : 1 lines.

Fig. S10. China's major air pollutant emissions (SO₂, NO_x and primary PM_{2.5}) by sectors and fuel types in 2060 under different scenarios.

Fig. S11. Monthly (a) and annually (b) impacts of meteorology variations on China's future populationweighted mean PM2.5 concentrations in 2030 and 2060 under the *Ambitious-pollution-2℃-goals* scenario.

Table S1.a. Detailed clean air measures, process, and policy parameters of the three air pollution control scenarios (i.e. *Baseline, Current-goals, Ambitiouspollution control*) in the power sector.

Table S1.b. Detailed clean air measures, process, and policy parameters of the three air pollution control scenarios (i.e. *Baseline, Current-goals, Ambitiouspollution control*) in the industry sector.

Table S1.c. Detailed clean air measures, process, and policy parameters of the three air pollution control scenarios (i.e. *Baseline, Current-goals, Ambitious-pollution control*) in the transportation sector.

Table S1.d. Detailed clean air measures, process, and policy parameters of the three air pollution control scenarios (i.e. *Baseline, Current-goals, Ambitiouspollution control*) in the residential, agriculture and solvent use sectors.

Table S2. Descriptions of scenarios used in this study.

Table S3. China's anthropogenic CO₂ emissions under the NDC target in 2030 and the projected natural carbon sink in 2060 under low radiation forcing scenarios (applied as China's carbon neutrality goals in 2060).

Table S4. Region definitions in this study.

Table S5. Summary of emission and meteorology configurations used in this study.

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