Assimilation of AMSU-A in the presence of cloud and precipitation

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Brief introduction to all sky assimilation at ECMWF

- All sky assimilation of MW satellite data since 2009
- No cloud screening
- Radiative transfer takes cloud and precipitation into account
- Variable observation error model inflates errors in presence of cloud and precipitation
- Instruments currently assimilated:
  - MW imagers: SSMIS, GMI, AMSR2
  - MW humidity sounders: MHS, MWHS2, SAPHIR
- Importance of all sky data has increased steadily in recent years
- Currently all sky assimilation results in up to 4% reduction in Z500 forecast errors out to day 5/6
Motivation for moving AMSU-A to all sky assimilation

• The impact of MW humidity sounding data is ~doubled in all sky compared to clear sky

• Allows the use of extra data in meteorologically active areas:
  – We generally care more about where clouds and precipitation are than where they aren’t! e.g. tropical and extra-tropical storms, convection etc.
  – Up to 25% of AMSU-A channels 5-8 data is currently screened out due to cloud

• Lower peaking channel 4 has strong sensitivity to cloud liquid water and is not currently assimilated

• Technically easier to maintain one system rather than two (clear sky and all sky systems)
All sky and clear sky systems

- All sky and clear sky systems are fundamentally different in how observations are pre-processed and assimilated, therefore the plan is to:

  1. Remove or reduce any differences as much as possible e.g. match up quality control and thinning
  2. Isolate performance difference (if any) between clear sky treatment of AMSU-A in clear sky system v all sky system
  3. Then measure benefit (or degradation) of additionally assimilating cloud affected data
Observation error model

- Variable observation error model is used to make normalized first guess departures more Gaussian and let cloud affected observations past quality control.

- Over sea the retrieved cloud liquid water path from window channels 1 (23.8GHz) and 2 (31.0GHz) is used as a cloud predictor (Grody et al, 2001).

- Over land the 23-89GHz scattering index (difference in radiances between channels 1 and 15 (89.0GHz)) is used as a cloud predictor.

- The standard deviation of first guess departures is then binned against the symmetric cloud predictors.

- An error model is fitted to these histograms so less weight is given to radiances that are affected by cloud.
Experiment summary

• Baseline control:
  – Full observing system
  – Cycle 43r1 (operational Nov 2016 – Jul 2017)

• Three flavours of experiments:
  – Degraded control – without slant path radiative transfer, simplified cloud screening, orography screening
  – Clear sky through all sky – channels 5 to 14, same observation errors as clear sky control
  – All sky – channels 5 to 14, same clear sky errors, all sky errors calculated from O-B statistics

• Experiments were run for 2 periods of 4 months each and all results are merged
Normalised changes in AMSU-A counts and first guess fits

- Degraded control has more conservative cloud detection => fewer lower peaking channels are deemed cloud free
- All sky thinning results in more observations overall due to remaining thinning differences
- Clear sky thinning selects observations with lowest channel 4 departure => lower fg dep for other channels (esp lower peaking channels) and more lower peaking channels cloud screened in clear sky through all sky
- Background departures larger in all sky due to cloud effects
Results

- Both clear sky through all sky and all sky AMSU-A experiments show significant degradations in the stratosphere.
- Clear sky through all sky also degrades the troposphere.
- All sky is better in the troposphere but only returns to neutral at best against the control.

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Clear sky through all sky change in geopotential height forecast error days 2-5

All sky change in geopotential height forecast error days 2-5
AMSU-A all sky - investigations

• Possible reasons for the stratospheric degradations:
  – Different distribution of observations
  – Unexpected differences between RTTOV and RTTOV-SCATT for stratospheric peaking channels

• Possible reasons for tropospheric degradations in clear sky through all sky:
  – Emissivity bias leading to larger biases in channel 4 and 5 in the all sky system
  – Channel 4 departures are used for cloud detection over land so the bias skews the cloud detection
AMSU-A all sky - investigations

• Bias predictors used for AMSU-A channel 3:
  – Original: T skin, TCWV, surface wind speed, third order polynomial scan angle, constant
  – Flat bias predictors & no bias correct: Third order polynomial scan angle, constant

• No bias correct: don’t bias correct channel 3 brightness temperature for emissivity retrieval
Conclusions and future work

- The clear sky and all sky systems have been made more consistent with their treatment of observations
- The observation error model for AMSU-A has been refined
- Clear sky through all sky results remain slightly negative against clear sky AMSU-A baseline
- Move to all sky results in improved short to medium range forecasts in the troposphere but further degrades stratosphere
- Aspects to investigate further:
  - Degradations in stratosphere from clear sky through all sky and all sky experiments (clear/all sky RT differences, different distribution of observations)
  - Another set of experiments with fixes/improvements and updated IFS cycle
- Longer term:
  - Introduction of all sky assimilation of AMSU-A channel 4
  - Investigate the use of ATMS temperature and humidity sounding channels in the all sky system