IMK/IAA MIPAS retrievals version 8: CH$_4$ and N$_2$O

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Abstract. Using the IMK/IAA data processor, methane and nitrous oxide distributions were retrieved from version 8 limb emission spectra recorded with the Michelson Inferferometer for Passive Atmospheric Sounding (MIPAS). The dataset includes measurements from the Nominal, UTLS-1, Middle Atmosphere, Upper Atmosphere and Noctilucent Cloud observation modes. The processing differs from the previous version 5 data with respect to the atmospheric state variables jointly retrieved with the target gases CH$_4$ and N$_2$O, the treatment of the radiance offset, the selection of microwindows, the regularization, the spectroscopic data used and the treatment of horizontal variability of the atmospheric state. Besides the regular data product, a coarse-grid representation of the profiles with unity averaging kernels is available, as well as a specific research product for Middle Atmosphere measurements resulting from a slightly different retrieval approach. The CH$_4$ errors are dominated by the large spectroscopic uncertainty for line intensities, which probably is too pessimistic, and estimated to be 21 - 34% in the altitude range 6 - 68 km for northern midlatitude summer day conditions. The N$_2$O errors are 7 - 17% below 45 km. At higher altitudes they increase strongly due to nearly vanishing N$_2$O amounts. Analysis of the horizontal averaging kernels reveals that for both gases the horizontal resolution is sampling-limited, i.e., information is not smeared over consecutive limb scans. Zonal mean seasonal composites of both CH$_4$ and N$_2$O exhibit the typical distribution of source gases with strong upwelling in the tropics and subsidence above the winter poles. Comparison with the previous data version shows several improvements: First, the vertical resolution of the retrieved CH$_4$ (N$_2$O) profiles has generally been significantly enhanced and varies between 2.5 (2.5) and 4 (5) km at altitudes between 10 and 60 km, with the best resolution around 30 km for both species. Secondly, the number of not converged retrievals has been clearly reduced, and thirdly, formerly strongly oscillating profiles are now considerably smoother.

1 Introduction

Both methane (CH$_4$) and nitrous oxide (N$_2$O) are so-called source gases. That is to say, they are produced on the Earth's surface, and they survive the transport into the stratosphere, since they are chemically quite inert. There, they are decomposed by photolysis and reaction with radicals. N$_2$O also has an additional source in the upper mesosphere and lower thermosphere (Funke et al., 2008; Sheese et al., 2016; Kelly et al., 2018). The main sink reaction of stratospheric methane is oxidation by the hydroxyl radical OH. Further sink reactions include reaction with excited atomic oxygen (O(^{1}D)), atomic chlorine, and

photolysis. The primary sink reaction of stratospheric nitrous oxide involves $O(^1D)$, but photolysis also plays a role (Brasseur and Solomon, 2005).

Both CH_4 and N_2O act as greenhouse gases. Their global warming potential per molecule exceeds that of CO_2 (Myhre et al., 2014). Beyond this, both species contribute indirectly to stratospheric ozone destruction: Methane is a source of strato-
5 spheric water vapour and thus has impact on the possibility of heterogeneous chemistry via polar stratospheric cloud formation (Shindell, 2001). Nitrous oxide is a source of reactive nitrogen (Ravishankara et al., 2009).

Due to their relatively long stratospheric lifetimes, CH_4 and N_2O are suitable as tracers of stratospheric circulation. Low mixing ratios of these species at a given altitude are a sign of a subsided air mass (see, e.g., Toon et al. (1992) or Funke et al. (2014)). Volk et al. (1996) use these gases to analyze lower stratospheric transport, and von Clarmann et al. (2021) use these
10 species to infer middle stratospheric circulation by inversion of the continuity equation.

CH_4 and N_2O can be measured either by air-sampling techniques (e.g., Volk et al., 1996) or by remote sensing. Since any remote observation, whose line of sight runs through the entire atmosphere (ground-based or nadir measurements), is dominated by the tropospheric contribution of these gases, occultation and limb emission measurements are considered as superior to investigate stratospheric dynamics. The list of space missions which have measured one or both of these species includes the
15 Atmospheric Trace Molecule Spectroscopy (ATMOS, Gunson et al. 1996), the Halogen Occultation Experiment (HALOE, Park et al. 1996; Grooß and Russell III 2005), the Atmospheric Chemistry Experiment / Fourier Transform Spectrometer (ACE-FTS, Strong et al. 2008; De Mazière et al. 2008; Sheese et al. 2016), the Microwave Limb Sounder on Aura (Aura-MLS, Lambert et al. 2007; Livesey et al. 2011), the Submillimeter Wave Radiometer on Odin (Odin-SMR, Urban et al. 2005a, b), the Solar Occultation for Ice Experiment (SOFIE, Rong et al. 2016), as well as the SCanning Imaging Absorption spectroMeter
20 for Atmospheric CHartographY (SCIAMACHY, Noël et al. 2016) and the Michelson Interferometer for Passive Atmospheric Sounding (Fischer et al. 2008) on Envisat. A comparison of most of these measurements can be found in Hegglin and Tegtmeier (2017).

Earlier IMK/IAA MIPAS retrievals of CH_4 and N_2O were provided by Glatthor et al. (2005), von Clarmann et al. (2009b), and Plieninger et al. (2015). Bias problems with these data (Laeng et al., 2015; Plieninger et al., 2016) and the availability of
25 MIPAS version 8 spectra triggered the work on a new CH_4 and N_2O data set.

After a brief introduction to the MIPAS instrument (Section 2), we describe the retrieval of CH_4 and N_2O with a strong focus on improvements with respect to preceding data versions (Section 3). In Section 4 the error budget is presented, and vertical as well as horizontal averaging kernels are discussed. Results are presented in Section 5 and discussed in the light of seasonal composites, improved convergence, decreased profile oscillations and comparison with a former validation study (Plieninger
30 et al., 2016). We conclude with a brief discussion of the new data set and identify open problems that could not yet be solved.

2 MIPAS

The Michelson Interferometer for Passive Atmospheric Sounding (MIPAS) was a

payload of the Envisat research satellite of the European Space Agency (ESA). Envisat performed 14.4 polar sun-synchronous orbits per day, enabling measurements with global coverage. MIPAS relied on the measurement technique of mid-infrared Fourier transform spectrometry operating in limb-viewing geometry (Fischer et al., 2008). The spectral coverage was 4.1 to 14.6 μm (685–2410 cm^{-1}). In the first phase of the mission, from June 2002 to March 2004, MIPAS measured at

5   a full spectral resolution (FR) of 0.025 cm^{-1} (unapodized). After a technical defect of the interferometer slide, spectra were recorded in reduced spectral resolution (RR) of 0.0625 cm^{-1} (unapodized) from January 2005 to April 2012.

While the ESA provides their own data product (Dinelli et al., 2021; Raspollini et al., 2022), in this paper recent improvements of the retrieval of CH_4 and N_2O from MIPAS radiance spectra version 8.03 with the level-2 data processor developed and operated by the Institute for Meteorology and Climate Research (IMK) in cooperation with the Instituto de Astrofísica de

10   Andalucía (IAA) are discussed. Improvements with respect to calibration of the version 8.03 radiance spectra and their relevance to the retrieval are discussed in Kiefer et al. (2021) and Kiefer et al. (2022). Here we concentrate on the progress made with respect to level-2 processing, i.e., the inference of volume mixing ratios (VMR) from the radiance spectra and related data characterization.

This paper covers data from both the FR and the RR mission phases and includes measurements recorded in the Nominal

15   (NOM), the Upper Troposphere Lower Stratosphere (UTLS-1), the Middle Atmosphere (MA), the Upper Atmosphere (UA) and the Noctilucent Cloud (NLC) measurement modes. An overview of these modes can be found in the MIPAS mission plan (Oelhaf, 2008). The respective data versions are V8H_CH4_61 and V8H_N2O_61 for FR measurements, V8R_CH4_261 and V8R_N2O_261 for RR NOM measurements, V8R_CH4_161 and V8R_N2O_161 for UTLS-1 measurements, V8R_CH4_662 and V8R_N2O_662 for UA and V8R_CH4_762 and V8R_N2O_762 for NLC measurements. For MA measurements, we offer

20   two co-existing data versions. The versions V8R_CH4_561 and V8R_N2O_561 are more consistent with NOM measurements while V8R_CH4_562 and V8R_N2O_562 are better suited for use in combination with UA measurements (more details in Sect. 3.6). Table 1 gives an overview of the different version 8 CH_4 and N_2O data products.

3   Retrieval

The retrieval relies on constrained multi-target least squares fitting as described by von Clarmann et al. (2003) and von Clar-

25   mann et al. (2009b). The radiative transfer model in use is the Karlsruhe Optimized and Precise Radiative Transfer Algorithm KOPRA (Stiller, 2000). The retrieval of CH_4 and N_2O is part of a sequential procedure and follows the retrieval of temperature and tangent altitude corrections (Kiefer et al., 2021), ozone (Kiefer et al., 2022), water vapour (Kiefer et al., 2023) and HNO_3 (Stiller et al., 2023). The results of these preceding V8 retrievals are used for the retrieval of CH_4 and N_2O. For modelling of the radiance contribution of species, which follow later in the retrieval chain, data version V5 mixing ratios are used.

30   Both MIPAS IMK/IAA CH_4 and N_2O profiles always had a high bias in the troposphere and the lower stratosphere (Laeng et al., 2015; Plieninger et al., 2016). The high methane bias of data versions V5R_CH4_220 and V5R_CH4_221 was reduced by discarding saturated methane lines (Plieninger et al., 2015). However, there was a price to pay in that for resulting data versions V5H_CH4_21, V5H_N2O_21, V5R_CH4_224, V5R_CH4_225, V5R_N2O_224, and V5R_N2O_225, the vertical

Table 1. List of CH_4 and N_2O data products.

Mode	Data product	Height range of scan / km	Retrieval log/lin
FR_NOM	CH4_61	6-68	lin
FR_NOM	N2O_61	6-68	lin
RR_NOM	CH4_261	7-72	lin
RR_NOM	N2O_261	7-72	lin
RR_UTLS	CH4_161	5.5-49	lin
RR_UTLS	N2O_161	5.5-49	lin
RR_MA	CH4_561	18-102	lin
RR_MA	N2O_561	18-102	lin
RR_MA	CH4_562	18-102	log
RR_MA	N2O_562	18-102	log
RR_UA	CH4_662	42-112[a]	log
RR_UA	N2O_662	42-112[a]	log
RR_NLC	CH4_762	39-102	log
RR_NLC	N2O_762	39-102	log

(a) Height range used for retrievals. The complete scan of measurements extends up to 172 km.

resolution of both species was considerably deteriorated in the altitude range from 10 to 20 km. The goal of version V8 processing was to improve the vertical resolution relative to version V5 without increasing the high bias again.

Another issue with previous data versions was the frequent non-convergence of the retrievals in situations of non-monotonous decrease of CH_4 and N_2O with altitude or of pronounced horizontal inhomogeneities of the atmospheric state. Such conditions were typically encountered when the line of sight of the measurement passed through the boundary of the polar vortex. In consequence, V8 processing aimed at a higher convergence rate even under extreme atmospheric conditions. In many cases of non-convergence, the target quantities in the course of the iteration flipped back and forth between two solutions, which were associated with approximately the same value of the cost function. In this case, application of an oscillation detection proved to be a particularly useful feature. The oscillation detector calculates the mean of the two solutions as initial guess of the next iteration. More details are given in Kiefer et al. (2021). Beside a second improvement presented in Section 3.1, this intervention lead to a considerable decrease of the fraction of not converged retrievals.

Like for previous CH_4- and N_2O-retrievals, a more restrictive cloud filter than for temperature and tangent altitude retrieval (cloud-threshold of 4.0 using analysis windows around 792 and 833 cm^{-1}) was used for the V8 data version by additionally discarding spectra with a mean spectral radiance contrast of less than 1.8 between the analysis windows 1246.3–1249.1 cm^{-1} and 1232.3–1234.4 cm^{-1}. Due to this more restrictive cloud filter, MIPAS CH_4 and N_2O profiles often do not reach as far down as, e.g., those of temperature, O_3 or HNO_3. Mostly they end at one tangent altitude further above.

The most relevant changes in the V8 retrieval setup compared to the earlier data versions are related to the selection of microwindows, the spectroscopic data, the regularization, the treatment of horizontal variability and the modelling of the zero offset.

Some purely technical adjustments resulting in a higher numerical precision of the entire V8 retrieval chain have already been reported by Kiefer et al. (2021) and Kiefer et al. (2022). In the following we discuss the specific retrieval settings relevant to the combined V8 CH_4 and N_2O retrieval.

3.1 The unknowns of the retrieval

Since CH_4 and N_2O have a lot of overlapping lines, profiles of both species are obtained together in a co-target retrieval. For NOM measurements their profiles are sampled on a discrete retrieval grid with a gridwidth of 1 km between 4 and 70 km and additional levels at 75, 80, 90, 100 and 120 km. For the MA-, UA- and NLC-measurement modes, the retrieval grid also has a 1-km spacing up to 70 km, a 2-km spacing from 70 to 90 km altitude, a 2.5-km spacing between 90 and 95 km, a 5-km spacing between 95 and 110 km, and an additional level at 120 km. In the V8 retrievals, for the first time horizontal mixing ratio gradients of both target gases were additionally retrieved along with the other unknowns. This procedure turned out to be the second essential means to improve the convergence rate. Contrary to the previous data version, H_2O and HNO_3 were no longer joint-fitted, but their previously retrieved V8 profiles were used instead. This change saved computation time and had hardly any influence on the retrieved CH_4- and N_2O-profiles. Further, an altitude- and microwindow-dependent background continuum (Sect. 3.1.1), which had proven adequate in previous data versions, as well as a radiance offset correction (Sect. 3.1.2) were retrieved.

3.1.1 Background continuum

Since the first MIPAS retrievals, a background continuum is fitted to minimize that part of the residual between measured and modeled spectra which cannot be explained by the contribution of trace gas transitions (von Clarmann et al., 2003). This continuum is realized by a wavenumber-independent absorption cross-section per microwindow and altitude. The background continuum has been considered up to the altitude of 58 km since the last data version (for details see Kiefer et al., 2021). Above, the continuum is forced towards zero by a diagonal term of the regularization matrix (cf. Section 3.3). For evaluation of UTLS-1 measurements the continuum is retrieved for altitudes up to 44 km only, because in this mode the upper end of the limb scan is already at about 50 km altitude.

3.1.2 Radiance offset

To correct for a potentially non-perfect zero-level calibration of the spectra, an additive radiance offset is fitted along with the target variables. While the radiance offset correction fitted in previous data versions was allowed to be microwindow-dependent, but forced to be altitude-constant, it is now allowed to be altitude-dependent as well. By this means the instrumental characteristic can be reproduced better. We use a priori information on the offset as provided by Kleinert et al. (2018). This

is necessary, because at higher altitudes radiative transfer is close to linear, which makes the background continuum and the radiance offset practically indistinguishable. Without an a priori constraint this would lead to instabilities in the retrieval.

3.2 Horizontal gradients

Traditional limb sounding retrieval methods assume a spherically homogeneous atmosphere where the atmospheric state varies

5 with altitude only. This assumption, however, can be inadequate, and contributed to convergence failures in various previous CH_4 and N_2O retrievals in the vortex boundary region. Ideally, this problem would be solved by a fully tomographic retrieval (see, e.g., Carlotti et al., 2001, 2006; Steck et al., 2005). But in combination with accurate radiative transfer modelling the computational workload involved in this case can be obstructive. Instead, we consider horizontal temperature inhomogeneities by inferring a 2D temperature distribution in the plane spanned by the lines of sight of the limb sequence under analysis directly

10 from the retrieved V8 3D temperature fields (cf. Kiefer et al., 2021).

Several approaches to model the horizontal inhomogeneity of the retrieved trace gases - among others of CH_4 and N_2O - were tested as well. One of them was to import the information on the horizontal structure of trace gas fields from previous MIPAS data versions. However, none of the approaches improved the χ^2 of the spectral fit or led to better consistency with the overall 3D structures found in previous data versions. Thus, these approaches were finally discarded. Instead, the horizontal gradients

15 of the CH_4 and N_2O mixing ratios were jointly retrieved along with the mixing ratios at the nominal geolocation, continuum and offset. As mentioned above, besides the use of an oscillation detector within the retrieval iterations this treatment also led to a larger fraction of converged retrievals. A comparison between the V5- and V8-convergence rates is given in Section 5.2.

3.3 Regularization

As usual for IMK/IAA MIPAS data evaluation, the regularization of the V8 methane and nitrous oxide retrieval consisted in use

20 of a smoothing term based on a squared first order difference operator (see, e.g., Tikhonov, 1963; Twomey, 1963; Phillips, 1962) in combination with a flat all zero a priori profile. In order to avoid large negative mixing ratios at high altitudes an additional diagonal term was included in the regularization matrix, which pushes the result towards the a priori profile. This follows the idea of an optimal estimation or maximum a posteriori retrieval (Rodgers, 2000). This diagonal term was employed at the five highest vertical gridpoints for CH_4 and the two uppermost gridpoints for N_2O only. With this modification, which had already

25 been implemented by Plieninger et al. (2015) for version V5 retrievals, the Tikhonov-type smoothing regularization could be reduced at altitudes above 70 km without risking retrieval instabilities. The formalism to control the altitude dependence of the smoothing constraint used here is described by Kiefer et al. (2021, their Eq. (3)), and replaces the approach by Steck and von Clarmann (2001) that was previously used.

3.4 Microwindows

30 MIPAS retrievals of CH_4 and N_2O use the spectral region around 1300 cm^{-1} in the MIPAS B-band. The most prominent spectral lines in this region belong to the CH_4 ν_4 band and the N_2O ν_1 band. In comparison to the previous retrieval-setups

Table 2. Microwindows used for MIPAS CH$_4$- and N$_2$O-retrieval for full (first column) and reduced (second column) spectral resolution.

Wavenumber range (FR) (cm^{-1})	Wavenumber range (RR) (cm^{-1})	Altitude range (km)
1217.0000–1221.0500	1217.0000–1221.0625	12–21
1223.5000–1226.5000	1223.5000–1226.5000	12–21
1226.6250–1230.8000	1226.6250–1230.8125	6–72
1231.2500–1235.5000	1231.2500–1235.5000	6–72
1235.7000–1240.0000	1235.6875–1240.0000	6–72
1240.5000–1244.8000	1240.5000–1244.8125	12–72
1245.0000–1249.1250	1245.0000–1249.1250	12–72
1250.3250–1252.8000	1250.3125–1252.8125	6–18
1254.0000–1257.5500	1254.0000–1257.5625	18–72
1258.0000–1259.3000	1258.0000–1259.3125	15–72
1261.3250–1264.1250	1261.3125–1264.1250	18–72
1266.0000–1269.3750	1266.0000–1269.3750	18–72
1270.0000–1274.0000	1270.0000–1274.0000	18–72
1274.3250–1277.5000	1274.3125–1277.5000	18–72
1277.8250–1281.7500	1277.8125–1281.7500	18–72
1282.5000–1283.5500	1282.5000–1283.5625	30–72
1287.6250–1291.6250	1287.6250–1291.6250	30–72
1292.2000–1296.4250	1292.1875–1296.4375	30–72
1296.8750–1299.5000	1296.8750–1299.5000	30–72
1302.7500–1306.5000	1302.7500–1306.5000	30–72
1321.8750–1322.3000	1321.8750–1322.3125	52–72
1326.8750–1327.5000	1326.8750–1327.5000	52–72
1331.8750–1332.9250	1331.8750–1332.9375	52–72
1336.8750–1337.9250	1336.8750–1337.9375	52–72

(V5H_CH4_21, V5H_N2O_21, V5R_CH4_224 and V5R_N2O_224, see Plieninger et al. 2015), the number of spectral grid-points used for the retrieval of CH$_4$ and N$_2$O has been considerably enlarged, both by increasing the wavenumber range used for analysis to 1217.0–1337.9375 cm^{-1} and by taking into account more CH$_4$ and N$_2$O lines. Especially the latter change led to a considerably better altitude resolution in the UTLS region. The new setup consists of 24 microwindows. In order to

5 reduce saturation effects, only microwindows between 1217 and 1260 cm^{-1} were used at tangent altitudes below 16.5 km. Microwindows at higher wavenumbers containing stronger lines were subsequently added at higher tangent altitudes.

The microwindows used for NOminal Mode retrievals (FR and RR) are listed in Table 2. These analysis windows are not always used completely over the full height range. Generally, at lower altitudes spectral gridpoints with appreciable interferences by other species are discarded, depending on the strength of the interference, while at stratospheric altitudes and above the full

10 windows are used. The microwindows applied for MA-, UA- and NLC-retrievals are slightly different in the lower atmosphere.

3.5 Spectroscopy

While former MIPAS level-2 processing relied largely on older spectroscopic data of the HITRAN database (e.g., HITRAN08 for V5 CH_4 and N_2O (Rothman et al., 2009)), for version V8 data processing generally the HITRAN2016 (Gordon et al., 2017) line list was used. In the spectral range of our CH_4 and N_2O retrievals, the HITRAN2016 methane line intensities are

5   somewhat larger than those of HITRAN2008, about 1% for weak lines and clearly below 1% for strong lines. This leads to a very small reduction of up to 0.02 ppmv in retrieved CH_4 mixing ratios. The spectroscopic data for N_2O have hardly changed between HITRAN2008 and HITRAN2016 in the spectral region 1200-1340 cm^{-1}.

Although line coupling in the CH_4 ν_3 and ν_4 bands has been investigated by Tran et al. (2006), the HITRAN2016 database does not include the relevant data. Thus, line mixing effects were not considered. Resulting retrieval errors are deemed neg-

10   ligible, because Tran et al. (2006) report very small effects in radiance spectra of the CH_4 ν_4 band modelled for satellite applications. Beyond this, the effects are largely masked by the signal of interfering species, particularly H_2O, N_2O, and CO_2. The Q-branch, where line-mixing effects are most relevant, is used in our retrieval at altitudes above 28.5 km only. At these low pressures, line mixing is even less of an issue.

3.6 MA, UA and NLC retrieval settings

15   The retrievals for MA, UA and NLC observation modes differ from those of the NOM measurements with respect to the following settings: The consideration of non-local thermodynamic equilibrium (non-LTE) emissions (López-Puertas and Taylor, 2001), the definition of the state vector, and the regularization chosen.

For CH_4 and N_2O retrievals from measurements recorded in the NOM and UTLS-1 measurement modes, the local thermodynamic equilibrium approximation is adequate. The situation is different for MA, UA, and NLC measurements, where

20   non-LTE emissions of CH_4, N_2O and H_2O have to be considered. Non-LTE populations are computed with the Generic RAdiative traNsfer AnD non-LTE population Algorithm (GRANADA, Funke et al., 2012), which is part of the retrieval iteration in the sense that GRANADA is fed during each iteration with the updated guess values of the relevant atmospheric state variables. For N_2O, the following transitions were considered for non-LTE: 0200-0000, 1000-0000, 0310-0110, 1110-0110, 1200-0200, 1220-0220 and 2000-1000. In retrospective, however, related non-LTE contributions were found to be negligibly

25   small with effects of about 0.1 $nW/(cm^2sr\ cm^{-1})$. For CH_4, the transitions 0001-0000, 0100-0000, 0002-0001, and 0101-0100 were considered. Only transitions involving the fundamental band were found to show a sizable signal difference associated with non-LTE-effects. The most important non-LTE contributions are associated with the 010-000 and the 020-010 transitions of the interfering species H_2O.

While in NOM, UTLS-1 and the first version of MA retrievals the mixing ratios of trace constituents are retrieved, in the

30   second version of MA retrievals (see below) as well as in UA and NLC retrievals their logarithm is retrieved. The effect of this redefinition of the formal state variables is that the regularization is implicitly self-adaptive to the abundance of the species. This turned out to be advantageous because of the large dynamic range of mixing ratios, especially when high altitudes are included. Instead of an all-zero a priori profile as used in the NOM retrievals, gas-dependent a priori profiles are used. For

CH_4, these are taken from a climatology generated with the Whole Atmosphere Community Climate Model (WACCM, Marsh, 2011; Marsh et al., 2013) version 4. For N_2O, geolocated output from a specified dynamics WACCM run is used up to the altitude of 90 km. Above 100 km the a priori mixing ratio is set to 20 ppbv, which corresponds to the climatological mean of ACE-FTS profiles (Sheese et al. 2016). Between 90 and 100 km the N_2O a priori is a smooth transition between the WACCM value at 90 km and the climatological mean of 20 ppbv used above 100 km.

For the MA retrievals, we offer two coexisting data versions. Version V8R_CH4_561 and V8R_N2O_561 uses retrieval settings nearly completely consistent with those of the NOM retrievals. The major difference is consideration of non-LTE. Another difference is a slight change of the CH_4 constraint above 70 km altitude. This data version is suggested to be used in combination with NOM measurements, when data users intend to fill gaps in the latter data set with MA data.

Version V8R_CH4_562 and V8R_N2O_562 is better compatible with UA measurements. The main difference to version V8R_CH4_561 and V8R_N2O_561 is that instead of the mixing ratios of the target gases their logarithms are retrieved. Further, only measurements from tangent altitudes at and above 40 km are used. Instead of all zero a prioris, the same a priori profiles as for the UA retrievals are used above 40 km. Like for the UA and NLC retrievals, the constraint has been adjusted for logarithmic retrievals. Further, a strong diagonal constraint is added to profile values below 35 km altitude in order to tie the results in this altitude range to the V8R_CH4_561 and V8R_N2O_561 data that are used as a priori here.

The additional data product V8R_CH4_562 and V8R_N2O_562 is not meant to supersede the data product V8R_CH4_561 and V8R_N2O_561. Within their diagnostic data (error estimates and averaging kernels) we consider both data versions as valid. As already mentioned above, the data versions 561 are recommended to be used in combination with NOM data and the versions 562 in combination with UA and NLC data.

4 Data characterization

The MIPAS data characterization presented here includes the error budget as well as vertical and horizontal averaging kernel matrices.

4.1 Error budget

Error analysis for both CH_4 and N_2O complies with the recommendations for unified error reporting by von Clarmann et al. (2020) and follows the methodology presented in von Clarmann et al. (2022). Relevant error sources and assumptions on the ingoing uncertainties are compiled in Tables 3 and 4 for FR and RR measurements, respectively. In detail, these Tables contain instrumental uncertainties, noise errors from retrieval of temperature, line of sight and prefitted gases, other uncertainties propagated from retrieval of temperature and line of sight and spectroscopic uncertainties.

Each error source in our error estimation is assumed to be given as 1-σ uncertainty. However, transformation of the uncertainty intervals of spectroscopic parameters reported in HITRAN2016 into this quantity leaves room for some interpretation. As a reasonable assumption, we decided to regard the average of the lower and upper bound of the intervals reported as 1-σ

error bars. If this should turn out to be inadequate, the data user will have to rescale the respective error components of our CH_4 and N_2O profiles.

For estimation of spectroscopic uncertainties, each CH_4 and N_2O line is disturbed in intensity and air-broadened half-width according to its HITRAN error code. For the dominant CH_4 transitions in the analysis windows used here, HITRAN2016

5 (Gordon et al., 2017) reports error code 3 for line intensity, corresponding to uncertainties larger than 20%. Thus, we perturbed the intensities of the strongest CH_4 lines by 25%. However, the error estimates for these lines are probably too pessimistic, and an error code of 5 (5 – 10%) might be more adequate (I. Gordon, pers. comm., 2023). Application of this error code would lead to considerably lower estimated CH_4 errors. For the air-broadened half-widths error code 6 is reported for strong CH_4 lines, which corresponds to uncertainties between 2% and 5%. Thus, for these lines the air-broadened half-widths are

10 perturbed by 3.5%. For previous MIPAS data versions we used uncertainty estimates by J.-M. Flaud and C. Piccolo (personal communication, 2002), which were much more optimistic with respect to uncertainties in line intensity (2-4% for the strongest CH_4 lines). However, our estimation of uncertainties in air-broadened half-widths was much more conservative then, namely 25%. Interestingly, the combined effect of both ways of disturbing the CH_4 lines leads to approximately the same spectroscopy-related uncertainty of the retrieved methane mixing ratios in the altitude range up to 30 km. But at higher altitudes our former

15 error estimates led to a much lower spectroscopic error, because the air-broadening becomes more and more unimportant. For strong N_2O lines, HITRAN assigns error code 6 (2-5%) both to line intensities and the air-broadened half-widths. Following our approach this transforms to 1-σ uncertainties of 3.5% used for perturbation of both line parameters.

We do not include the smoothing error in the error budget, because it is easily misinterpreted (von Clarmann, 2014). Instead, our CH_4 and N_2O profiles should be conceived as estimates of the smoothed true profile (See Rodgers, 2000, his Section 3.2.1,

20 for a discussion of this concept).

For each single CH_4 and N_2O profile, individual noise estimates are supplied. For the other error sources, mean error estimates are provided for each typical atmospheric condition (northern/southern, polar/midlatitude/tropics, winter/spring/summer/autumn, day/night), which can be assigned to the profile under assessment. In total, 34 different atmospheric states are taken into account, each of them represented by about 30 geolocations. Following the recommendations of TUNER

25 (Towards Unified Error Reporting, von Clarmann et al., 2020), we categorize each error source either as chiefly random or as chiefly systematic. For mixed errors, which cause both bias and scatter ("headache errors"), both components are reported separately. We aggregate the resulting random and systematic error components separately. The whole set of mean error estimates for each of the different atmospheric conditions is compiled in the Supplement.

As an example, we present the error estimation for daytime northern midlatitude summer. Figure 1 shows height profiles of

30 the total error, total systematic and random errors and of the major single error components as percentage of the mean CH_4 and N_2O profiles for this atmospheric scenario. The components "ILS", "spectro" and "gain" are regarded as systematic errors, although the gain error has a small random component as well. The other components are considered as random. The numerical values as well as the respective absolute errors can be found in the Supplement.

The total CH_4 error is rather large and does not vary much over the altitude range 12 to 68 km, namely between 21 and 34%

35 for FR and between 21 and 30% for RR measurements. The reason is the dominance of the spectroscopic error, which nearly

Table 3. Assumed ingoing uncertainties (FR-NOM): Ingoing uncertainties given as error range are minimum and maximum values determined for northern midlatitude day conditions. For this purpose, scenario-averages were calculated for each retrieval altitude or tangent height in the altitude range 10 to 70 km. The minimum and maximum ingoing noise errors given for temperature, tangent altitude and vmr are calculated from the target-ESD of the respective retrieval. Minimum and maximum ingoing propagated errors for offset, gain, shift, ILS and CO_2-spectroscopy are taken from the error estimation for temperature and line of sight. Column "Propagation Method": "G" refers to generalized Gaussian error propagation in a matrix formalism, "P" to error estimation via perturbance spectra. The numbers in braces refer to the equation in von Clarmann et al. (2022), in which the respective ingoing error is applied. If an unpublished V5 vmr data set is used, a reference to an earlier data version is included.

Type of Uncertainty	Value	Source	Propagation Method
noise	16 nW/ (cm^2 sr cm^{-1})[a]	Kleinert et al. (2018)	G(16)
offset	2.5 nW/ (cm^2 sr cm^{-1})[a]	Kleinert et al. (2018)	G(5;13)
gain random	0.21%	Kleinert et al. (2018)	P(21;22)
gain systematic	1.03%	Kleinert et al. (2018)	P(21;22)
spectral shift	0.00029 cm^{-1}	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(7)
ILS	3%	Hase (2003)	P(7;14;15)
temperature, noise	0.24 - 1.04 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	G(6)
tangent altitudes, noise	35.0 - 78.5 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	G(6)
temperature, offset	0.05 - 0.39 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(7)
tangent altitudes, offset	8.0 - 23.6 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(7)
temperature, gain systematic	0.30 - 0.79 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(19)
tang. alt., gain systemat.	1.9 - 51.1 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(19)
temperature, gain random	0.05 - 0.15 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(19)
tang. alt., gain random	0.4 - 9.3 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(19)
temperature, spectral shift	<0.01 - 0.71 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(17)
tang. alt., spectral shift	1.6 - 40.8 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(17)
temperature, ILS	0.03 - 1.26 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(7)
tangent altitudes, ILS	7.1 - 122.3 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(7)
temperature, CO_2 intens.	0.03 - 0.16 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(7)
tang. alt., CO_2 intens.	23.8 - 34.6 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(7)
temperature, CO_2 broad.	0.09 - 1.10 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(7)
tang. alt., CO_2 broad.	189.2 - 298.2 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(7)
vmr(H_2O)	1.60×10^{-1} - 2.54×10^{0} ppmv	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2023)	G(6)
vmr(HNO_3)	6.18×10^{-5} - 4.78×10^{-4} ppmv	V8 retrieval (Stiller et al., 2023)	G(6)
vmr(O_3)	3.13×10^{-2} - 1.42×10^{-1} ppmv	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2023)	G(6)
vmr(C_2H_2)	2.98×10^{-6} - 1.01×10^{-5} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Glatthor et al., 2007)	G(6)
vmr(C_3H_6O)	4.32×10^{-7} - 8.48×10^{-5} ppmv	V5 retrieval (unpublished data)	G(6)
vmr(CFC-113)	2.17×10^{-7} - 1.21×10^{-5} ppmv	V5 retrieval (unpublished data)	G(6)
vmr($ClONO_2$)	7.29×10^{-6} - 1.02×10^{-4} ppmv	V5 retrieval (von Clarmann et al., 2013)	G(6)
vmr(COF_2)	7.02×10^{-7} - 3.70×10^{-5} ppmv	V5 retrieval (von Clarmann et al., 2012)	G(6)
vmr(H_2O_2)	1.55×10^{-6} - 1.59×10^{-4} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Versick et al., 2012)	G(6)
vmr(HCN)	1.50×10^{-5} - 4.40×10^{-5} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Glatthor et al., 2009)	G(6)
vmr(HOCl)	2.45×10^{-7} - 7.78×10^{-5} ppmv	V5 retrieval (von Clarmann et al., 2012)	G(6)
vmr(N_2O_5)	2.49×10^{-5} - 3.76×10^{-4} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Mengistu Tsidu et al., 2004)	G(6)
vmr(NO_2)	7.78×10^{-8} - 3.78×10^{-4} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Funke et al., 2005)	G(6)
vmr(SO_2)	5.84×10^{-5} - 3.99×10^{-4} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Höpfner et al., 2015)	G(6)
line intensities CH_4	25% [b]	HITRAN (Gordon et al., 2017)	P(7)
broad. coeff. CH_4	3.5% [b]	HITRAN (Gordon et al., 2017)	P(7)
line intensities N_2O	3.5% [b]	HITRAN (Gordon et al., 2017)	P(7)
broad. coeff. N_2O	3.5% [b]	HITRAN (Gordon et al., 2017)	P(7)

(a) unapodized
(b) Uncertainties of the dominant CH_4- and N_2O-lines used for retrieval.

Table 4. Assumed ingoing uncertainties (RR-NOM): For details see Table 3. Ingoing uncertainties for RR-MA- and RR-UA-retrievals are not included in this table, because V5 prefits were not available for these modes, and climatological profiles were used. Maximum ingoing uncertainties for RR-MA- and RR-UA-V8-retrievals of temperature and O_3 at altitudes above 90 km are 7.41 K and 0.28 ppmv, respectively.

Type of Uncertainty	Value	Source	Propagation Method
noise	10 nW/ (cm^2 sr cm^{-1})[a]	Kleinert et al. (2018)	G(16)
offset	1.5 nW/ (cm^2 sr cm^{-1})[a]	Kleinert et al. (2018)	G(5;13)
gain random	0.21%	Kleinert et al. (2018)	P(21;22)
gain systematic	1.03%	Kleinert et al. (2018)	P(21;22)
spectral shift	0.00029 cm^{-1}	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(7)
ILS	3%	Hase (2003)	P(7;14,15)
temperature, noise	0.22 - 1.23 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	G(6)
tangent altitudes, noise	29.2 - 51.6 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	G(6)
temperature, offset	0.03 - 0.45 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(7)
tangent altitudes, offset	7.5 - 15.5 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(7)
temperature, gain systematic	0.22 - 0.81 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(19)
tang. alt., gain systemat.	1.1 - 48.7 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(19)
temperature, gain random	0.04 - 0.15 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(19)
tang. alt., gain random	0.2 - 8.9 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(19)
temperature, spectral shift	<0.1 - 0.10 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(17)
tang. alt., spectral shift	0.8 - 15.0 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(17)
temperature, ILS	0.05 - 1.16 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(7)
tangent altitudes, ILS	7.6 - 113.1 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(7)
temperature, CO_2 intens.	0.03 - 0.18 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(7)
tang. alt., CO_2 intens.	26.1 - 34.0 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(7)
temperature, CO_2 broad.	0.14 - 1.47 K	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2021)	P(7)
tang. alt., CO_2 broad.	198.1 - 251.7 m	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2022)	P(7)
vmr(H_2O)	1.87×10^{-1} - 2.24×10^{0} ppmv	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2023)	G(6)
vmr(HNO_3)	5.54×10^{-5} - 4.51×10^{-4} ppmv	V8 retrieval (Stiller et al., 2023)	G(6)
vmr(O_3)	2.48×10^{-2} - 8.52×10^{-2} ppmv	V8 retrieval (Kiefer et al., 2023)	G(6)
vmr(C_2H_2)	3.22×10^{-6} - 9.55×10^{-6} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Glatthor et al., 2007)	G(6)
vmr(C_3H_6O)	5.01×10^{-7} - 8.07×10^{-5} ppmv	V5 retrieval (unpublished data)	G(6)
vmr(CFC-113)	2.26×10^{-7} - 1.14×10^{-5} ppmv	V5 retrieval (unpublished data)	G(6)
vmr($ClONO_2$)	7.38×10^{-6} - 1.04×10^{-4} ppmv	V5 retrieval (von Clarmann et al., 2013)	G(6)
vmr(COF_2)	6.67×10^{-6} - 6.94×10^{-5} ppmv	database (Kiefer et al., 2002, and updates)	G(6)
vmr(H_2O_2)	3.03×10^{-6} - 1.12×10^{-4} ppmv	database (Kiefer et al., 2002, and updates)	G(6)
vmr(HCN)	1.54×10^{-5} - 4.41×10^{-5} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Glatthor et al., 2009)	G(6)
vmr(HOCl)	2.85×10^{-6} - 7.27×10^{-5} ppmv	database (Kiefer et al., 2002, and updates)	G(6)
vmr(N_2O_5)	2.68×10^{-5} - 3.54×10^{-4} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Mengistu Tsidu et al., 2004)	G(6)
vmr(NO_2)	7.49×10^{-8} - 3.77×10^{-4} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Funke et al., 2005)	G(6)
vmr(SO_2)	5.95×10^{-5} - 4.24×10^{-4} ppmv	V5 retrieval (Höpfner et al., 2015)	G(6)
line intensities CH_4	25%[b]	HITRAN (Gordon et al., 2017)	P(7)
broad. coeff. CH_4	3.5%[b]	HITRAN (Gordon et al., 2017)	P(7)
line intensities N_2O	3.5%[b]	HITRAN (Gordon et al., 2017)	P(7)
broad. coeff. N_2O	3.5%[b]	HITRAN (Gordon et al., 2017)	P(7)

(a) unapodized

(b) Uncertainties of the dominant CH_4- and N_2O-lines used for retrieval.

accounts for the whole systematic and total error. Consequently, the systematic error is much higher than the random error at altitudes up to 45 km and mostly still twice as high at the altitudes above. The random error is around 4-6% below 40 km and increases up to 15% at the upper altitudes. Up to 40 km the noise error accounts for half or more of the random error. At several of the higher altitudes the contribution of the other random errors becomes larger. Other noteworthy error components

5   are the gain error, which around 45 km amounts up to 10% for FR and up to 6% for RR measurements, and the ILS error, which at 45 km is 7% for FR and 5% for RR measurements. However, at most other altitudes these errors are considerably lower. Uncertainties in temperature and line of sight cause an error of 1-3%. The error due to uncertainties in interfering species (H_2O, O_3 and 14 other species) is below 0.4% both for FR and RR measurements and at various altitudes even drops to 0.1%.

Up to 45 km the total N_2O error is 7-17% for FR and 7-15% for RR measurements. At the altitudes above, the error increases

10   strongly up to 47% at 56 km. Towards the upper end of the scans it ranges from 75% to more than 100% for the FR mode and lies completely above 100% for the RR mode. Thus the total N_2O error is clearly lower than the CH_4 error at lower altitudes, but considerably higher at the upper altitudes. The reason for the lower relative errors up to 48 km is the smaller spectroscopic uncertainty. At the altitudes above, the N_2O signal becomes very weak, leading to a strong increase of the relative noise error. Consequently, the systematic error exceeds the random error up to about 40 km, while at the altitudes above spectral noise

15   becomes increasingly dominant. The main systematic error components are spectroscopic, gain and ILS errors. Up to 56 km, the spectroscopic error is 4 - 12% for the FR and 4 - 13% for the RR mode, the gain error 1 - 7% (FR) and 1 - 5% (RR), and the ILS error 0.4 - 7% (FR) and 1 - 5% (RR). At the altitudes above, these errors generally increase strongly. The main random errors are spectral noise and uncertainties in temperature and line of sight. Up to 42 km, spectral noise ranges from 2 to 4% (FR) and from 2 to 7% (RR) and increases strongly above. For both modes the error resulting from uncertainties in temperature

20   and line of sight is 1-2% up to 56 km and somewhat higher above. Up to 56 km the error caused by uncertainties in interfering species is just around 0.1% at various altitudes and 1% at the most. At the uppermost altitudes it increases to 3% for FR and to 18% for RR measurements.

Tangent altitude errors are partly correlated in the altitude domain, random across different limb scans, and fully systematic across different gases. Spectroscopic errors of the target gases are systematic in altitude and in time, except for effects caused

25   by the modulation of the initially systematic errors by variations of the atmospheric state. Gain errors are predominantly systematic in altitude and over one calibration period, but random over longer time periods. ILS errors are chiefly systematic in altitude and time. Errors caused by spectral noise are uncorrelated in time, while the non-diagonal gain matrix of the retrieval causes correlations in the altitude domain.

For the other atmospheric conditions the error estimates show only moderate deviations from the example presented here in

30   the altitude range 12 to 60 km. This applies to NOM measurement mode retrievals as well as to all other measurement modes. Somewhat larger deviations can be found at the upper ends of the scans due to stronger variations in mixing ratios. Further, the errors for MA and UA measurements above 70 km are mostly larger than 100% (cf. Supplement).

4.2 Profile averaging kernels and vertical resolution

Our characterization of the vertical resolution and the content of a priori information of the CH_4 and N_2O profiles relies on the averaging kernel matrices (Rodgers, 2000). Figure 2 shows the averaging kernel rows of CH_4 and N_2O NOM retrievals, respectively, referring to measurements recorded at full spectral resolution at 55.70°N on 10 October 2003 (left column)
5   and at reduced spectral resolution at 41.02°N on 26 December 2009 (right column). In the troposphere and through the whole stratosphere the averaging kernels are well-behaved in the sense that they are fairly symmetric and peak at the nominal altitudes for both modes and gases. However, at higher altitudes they become somewhat asymmetric, and the peaks of the N_2O-AKs are increasingly displaced from their nominal to lower heights.

Figure 3 shows the vertical resolution of CH_4 and N_2O profiles in terms of full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the
10   rows of the averaging kernels, obtained with the latest V5- and the V8-retrieval setup. For the measurements at full spectral resolution (left column) the V8 setup has improved in the altitude region 15 to 45 km for CH_4 and between 32 and 42 km for N_2O. Below 15 km, the vertical resolution of N_2O has become slightly worse. Numerically, for the measurements with full spectral resolution the vertical resolution of the V8 CH_4 (N_2O) retrievals varies between 3 (3) and 4.5 (5) km at altitudes between 10 and 50 km. For the measurements at reduced spectral resolution (right column) the V8-setup exhibits a large
15   improvement in the altitude range 10 to 20 km for both gases and above 45 km for N_2O. For this mode the vertical resolution obtained with the V8 setup varies between 2.5 (2.5) and 4 (5) km at altitudes between 10 and 65 km, with the best resolution at 30 km altitude for both species.

4.3 Horizontal averaging kernels

Since in limb sounding the line of sight extends over long horizontal distances in the atmosphere, horizontal averaging kernels
20   are an issue. Here we rely on the concept by von Clarmann et al. (2009a). Some more information on the technical application of this concept used here can be found in Kiefer et al. (2022). We report the horizontal smearing in terms of the full width at half maximum of the horizontal component of the 2D averaging kernels, and the information displacement both for CH_4 (Table 5) and N_2O (Table 6). The displacement is the horizontal distance between the nominal geolocation of the measurement and the point where most information comes from, calculated as the averaging-kernel-weighted mean horizontal coordinate. The
25   sign convention is such that positive values indicate displacements towards the satellite. The 2D averaging kernels presented here have been calculated for a limb scan, recorded on 29 April 2003 at 47.9°S, 39.8°W, for FR measurements and a limb scan, recorded on 18 September 2009 at 57.1°S, 176.1°W, for RR measurements.

For both gases and the majority of altitudes shown, the horizontal smearing is less than or comparable to the horizontal distance between two subsequent limb scans, which is about 500 km for FR and 400 km for RR measurements. The only
30   exceptions occur at the altitudes around 45 km as well as at the uppermost altitudes. This implies that the horizontal resolution is generally limited by the horizontal sampling of the measurements and not by the horizontal information smearing. Moreover, the information displacement is also fairly small, mostly below 100 km for CH_4 and below 125 km for N_2O, which is well below the horizontal distance between two limb scans. Nevertheless, in atmospheric situations with strong horizontal gradients,

Table 5. Horizontal information distribution for CH_4 full resolution (FR) measurements on 29 April 2003 and reduced resolution (RR) measurements on 18 September 2009.

Altitude (km)	FR-Smearing (km)	FR-Displacement (km)	RR-Smearing (km)	RR-Displacement (km)
70	518	-129	598	-26
65	483	-140	521	-46
60	457	-125	374	-66
55	722	72	415	-53
50	524	-91	529	-32
45	657	23	450	-29
40	453	-33	464	-3
35	408	6	376	0
30	356	30	380	35
25	358	72	332	43
20	326	95	292	61
15	292	113	289	89
10	269	131	267	110

Table 6. Horizontal information distribution for N_2O full resolution (FR) measurements on 29 April 2003 and reduced resolution (RR) measurements on 18 September 2009.

Altitude (km)	FR-Smearing (km)	FR-Displacement (km)	RR-Smearing (km)	RR-Displacement (km)
70	463	-151	493	-62
65	455	-153	471	-66
60	458	-143	428	-72
55	471	-121	357	-66
50	406	-122	344	-59
45	533	-57	352	-48
40	440	-45	374	-29
35	457	9	379	-9
30	383	34	456	69
25	401	77	346	53
20	358	98	310	64
15	357	117	314	89
10	301	125	297	110

like at the boundary of the polar vortices, this displacement might be an issue and should be considered for e.g. comparisons to highly resolving models.

5 Results

5.1 Seasonal composites

5 In Figures 4 and 5 we show zonal mean seasonal composites of CH_4 and N_2O retrieved in the NOM HR and NOM RR modes (V8H_CH4_61, V8R_CH4_161, V8R_CH4_261, V8H_N2O_61, V8R_N2O_161, V8R_N2O_261) during the period 2002-2012. Both distributions exhibit the typical features of a tropospheric trace gas with maximum VMRs in the troposphere, strong upwelling in the tropics with sharp latitudinal gradients at $\pm 20°$ in the lower to mid-stratosphere (so-called tropical pipe, (Plumb, 1996)), and downwelling above the winter poles. The tropospheric VMRs are somewhat higher between $40°S$

10 and $40°N$ than at higher latitudes, namely by 0.1-0.2 ppmv for CH_4 and by 20-30 ppbv for N_2O.

The upwelling in the tropical lower to mid-stratosphere exhibits slight latitudinal asymmetries characterized by a "nose" in the 1.6 ppmv contourline, which, e.g., during boreal and austral summer indicates transport towards the respective winter hemisphere. At higher altitudes there are larger-scale seasonal differences. During March to May, a double-peak is visible at 40-50 km with maxima at $30°S$ and $30°N$ and a local minimum at the Equator. This feature has already been detected in CH_4

15 measurements of the Stratospheric And Mesospheric Sounder (SAMS) from 1979 on the NIMBUS 7 satellite (Jones and Pyle, 1984). The sharp meridional gradient in stratospheric CH_4 around $60°S$, with very low VMRs extending much further down than at northern high latitudes, reflects the beginning formation of the Antarctic vortex. During June to August the southern tropical peak above 40 km has disappeared both for CH_4 and N_2O and is replaced by a kind of shoulder in the altitude range 30-40 km. Just below, the weak vertical and meridional gradient, identifiable e.g. from the wide distance between the 1.4 and

20 1.2 ppmv methane isolines, marks the formation of a pronounced surf zone in the southern winter-hemisphere. In contrast, the northern peak has expanded even some more upwards showing the beginning formation of the Brewer-Dobson cell of the next northern winter. Caused by progressed subsidence in the Antarctic vortex, low CH_4 and N_2O VMRs have subsided further downward at high southern latitudes. During September to November the northern tropical maximum is at somewhat lower altitudes than during summer. In the altitude range of 30-40 km there is a moderate southward decline of the contourlines

25 up to the edge of the Antarctic vortex at $70°S$, which still exists below 30 km. In the upper stratosphere the Antarctic vortex has largely been replaced by midlatitude airmasses. In the northern hemisphere the beginning build-up of the Arctic vortex is visible in the upper stratosphere. The period December to February has several similarities to June to August, if mirrored at the Equator. Above 40 km there is a maximum at $20°S$, but not quite as distinct as the northern tropical maximum during boreal summer. The Arctic vortex reflects progressed subsidence, but not as strong as its southern hemispheric counterpart during

30 June to August.

5.2 Major improvements with respect to preceding versions

To illustrate improvements achieved with respect to convergence failures and profile oscillations we compare latitude-height cross sections of CH_4 data versions V5R_CH4_224 and V8R_CH4_261 for two selected orbits (Figure 6). The top row shows the methane distribution along orbit 29041 of 19 September 2007. With the old setup, convergence was not achieved for seven

5   scans through the Antarctic vortex marked by white vertical stripes (top left). However, due to the use of the oscillation detector and modelling of horizontal CH_4 and N_2O gradients the number of not converged scans was reduced to just one with the V8-retrieval setup (top right). In general, this treatment led to a much larger fraction of converged retrievals. For FR measurements, the portion of non-converged retrievals had been as high as 8.4%, and could be reduced to 0.3%. For RR measurements, this number was lowered from 0.36% to 0.10%. While for RR measurements the fraction of non-converged retrievals had also been

10   rather low for the previous dataset, it has to be considered that these - like in our example - were not randomly distributed but associated with situations characterized by large horizontal inhomogeneities, such as vortex boundary conditions, where they cause sizable data gaps. Hence, this reduction in non-converged profiles is a significant improvement.

    The use of horizontal CH_4 and N_2O gradients also led to smoother profiles at geolocations, where formerly retrieved profiles had been strongly oscillating. This, e.g., can be seen in the CH_4 distributions along orbit 30832 of 23 January 2008 (bottom

15   row). For this orbit, retrievals are especially complicated at the edge of the inclined arctic vortex around 70°N, where vertical profiles have local maxima around 30 km. In this region the dataset V5R_CH4_N2O_224 exhibits strong oscillations (bottom left), which have disappeared in the V8 data (bottom right). For a more detailed picture, Figure 7 shows single CH_4 profiles for two scans in this critical region. While the V5R-profiles are strongly oscillating between 20 and 30 km with unphysically high vertical frequency, the V8R-profiles are much smoother in this height region.

20 ## 5.3 Delta Validation

The previous CH_4 and N_2O datasets were extensively validated by comparison with other satellite data and groundbased measurements (Plieninger et al., 2016). The outcome of this validation was that, below 25 km, there was likely a positive bias against other satellite measurements: 0.1 to 0.2 ppmv for CH_4 and up to 30 ppbv for N_2O. To check if the positive bias is still present in the V8 datasets, we limit ourselves to a delta-validation against the preceding dataset. Figure 8 shows zonal mean

25   differences between V8 and V5 CH_4 (left) and N_2O (right), averaged over the whole MIPAS dataset from 2002-2012. Here we abstain from presenting seasonal composites, because the differences are rather similar in every season. Especially between 40°S and 40°N the CH_4-differences exhibit oscillations of the order of 0.05 to 0.1 ppmv. Below 20 km, these differences are persistently positive, leading to an increase of the high bias by 0.05-0.1 ppmv. At the lowermost end of the difference plot the positive bias even extends over all latitudes. However, due to the large reduction of the observations at these altitudes by

30   the presence of clouds, these differences are of less statistical significance. While the positive difference between 25 and 30 km rather worsens the agreement with validation experiments determined by Plieninger et al. (2016) for these altitudes, the negative difference between 35 and 45 km compensates a slight positive bias in the previous CH_4 dataset. The positive bias above 65 km rather reflects a deficiency in the V5 dataset, which exhibits a kink in the profile shape at this altitude.

One of the main V8-V5-differences in N_2O is a nearly global band of up to 15 ppbv between 10 and 20 km. Thus, the positive bias determined for V5H_N2O_21 below 25 km seems to have increased in this region. Further, there is a positive bias of the same order at low latitudes around 27 km, However, there are also regions with negative differences - near 10 km at mid- to high latitudes and around 22 km at low latitudes. Here the positive bias against validation experiments apparently has

5   decreased. At altitudes above 35 km the differences are rather small, however here the N_2O VMRs also tend towards zero.

5.4   Coarse Grid Results

Quantitative application of the standard CH_4 and N_2O results obtained from regularized retrievals requires educated data users, who are familiar with the averaging kernel formalism. In order to make the use of MIPAS data within comparisons to model data easier, we provide an alternative representation on a coarser vertical grid of 23 pressure levels: 1000, 700, 400, 250,

10   150, 100, 50, 30, 15, 10, 5, 3, 1.5, 1, 0.5, 0.3, 0.1, 0.03, 0.01, 0.003, 0.001, 0.0003, and 0.00003 hPa. These values are a subset of a grid often used by chemistry-climate modellers (Eyring et al., 2013). In this representation, all information on the vertical resolution is included in the vertical grid, and no averaging kernels need to be considered (von Clarmann et al., 2015). These data are generated by maximum likelihood retrievals on a vertical grid coarse enough that effectively no regularization is required. The averaging kernels associated with these retrievals are unity by definition. Contrary to the standard retrievals

15   which represent mixing ratios at levels, and where linear variation in altitude is assumed between the levels, the coarse grid data are given as mean layer values. The boundaries of these layers are defined by pressure values, and the grid is constant for the entire data set. This makes interpolation unnecessary and simplifies comparison with model results or time series analysis.

In Figure 9 we compare the results of the standard (left) and of the coarse grid retrieval (right) for orbit 30863 from 25 January 2008. The main spatial features detected in the standard retrieval are also resolved in the coarse grid retrieval for CH_4

20   (top row) as well as for N_2O (bottom row). However, due to the coarser vertical grid, very fine spatial structures become blurry. This, e.g., becomes apparent in the CH_4 distribution at and above 30 km (10 hPa) in the region of the arctic vortex north of 60°N.

6   Conclusions

We presented MIPAS IMK-IAA methane and nitrous oxide data based on the most recent version 8 level-1b spectra and

25   processed using an improved retrieval approach. After description of the new retrieval setup, we performed a comprehensive error assessment considering the formalism outlined in the TUNER report (von Clarmann et al., 2020). Due to the large uncertainties in line intensity given in HITRAN2016 - which probably are too pessimistic - the total CH_4 error is between 21 and 34% in the altitude range 6 - 68 km for the atmospheric scenario presented (northern midlatitude summer day). For the same atmospheric conditions, the total N_2O error is 7 - 17% up to 45 km. At the altitudes above it increases strongly due to

30   very low N_2O signatures. We consider MIPAS version V8 CH_4 and N_2O data versions as superior over preceding versions. The main reasons are the following:

- The data are based on better calibrated level-1B spectra. In particular, trends are supposed to be less affected by instrumental drifts.

- The vertical resolution generally is better than that of the preceding version. This has been achieved by use of more CH_4 and N_2O lines in the retrieval setup.

- The fraction of converged retrievals has been increased. This has been achieved by application of an oscillation detector within the iterations of the retrieval and by additional retrieval of horizontal CH_4 and N_2O gradients. In particular, in situations where the line of sight crossed the boundary of the polar vortex, i.e. where, due to polar subsidence, very different mixing ratios were encountered at the same altitude in front of and behind the tangent point, non-consideration of the oscillation detector and of horizontal gradients had prevented retrievals from converging.

Unfortunately, compared to the previous data version, V8-CH_4 retrievals exhibit a high bias of up to 0.15 ppmv below 10 km at nearly all latitudes. At latitudes between 40°S and 40°N there is a high bias of up to 0.1 ppmv around 15 km and between 25 and 30 km. On the contrary there is a low bias at 20 and 40 km. Compared to the V5 data version, V8-N_2O exhibits a high bias of up to 15 ppbv in a band oscillating between 10 and 20 km altitude and at low latitudes around 27 km. Negative differences of up to -10 ppbv were found at mid- to high latitudes around 10 km and at low latitudes around 22 km. However, the high bias of MIPAS CH_4 and N_2O is well within the uncertainties in spectroscopic data.

We suspect that this bias might be due to the spectroscopic data used, which suffers from large uncertainties. The problem of uncertain spectroscopic data is not so severe in the case of ground-based and a couple of space-borne instruments that measure CH4 in solar absorption using the ν_3 band near 3000 cm^{-1}. A lot of work went into improving the accuracy of the spectroscopic data in that region. Emission spectroscopy, however, has to use longer wavelengths where the Planck function at terrestrial temperatures has values, which are high enough to provide a sufficiently large signal. We urge the spectroscopic community to devote a similar effort to the ν_4 region to improve satellite measurements of CH_4 by emission instruments.

Author contributions. NG developed the retrieval setup and finalized the paper. TvC wrote the initial draft of the paper. Together with GPS he organized the related activities. BF developed the retrieval setup for middle and upper atmosphere measurement modes. MGC and MLP contributed to NLTE-related issues. UG coded and maintained the retrieval software. MH helped to solve problems with the horizontal averaging kernels. SK and ALi performed the retrievals. MK performed the error estimation. ALa and GPS identified deficiencies in previous data versions fixed in the current version. All authors discussed strategies and results and contributed to the writing of the paper.

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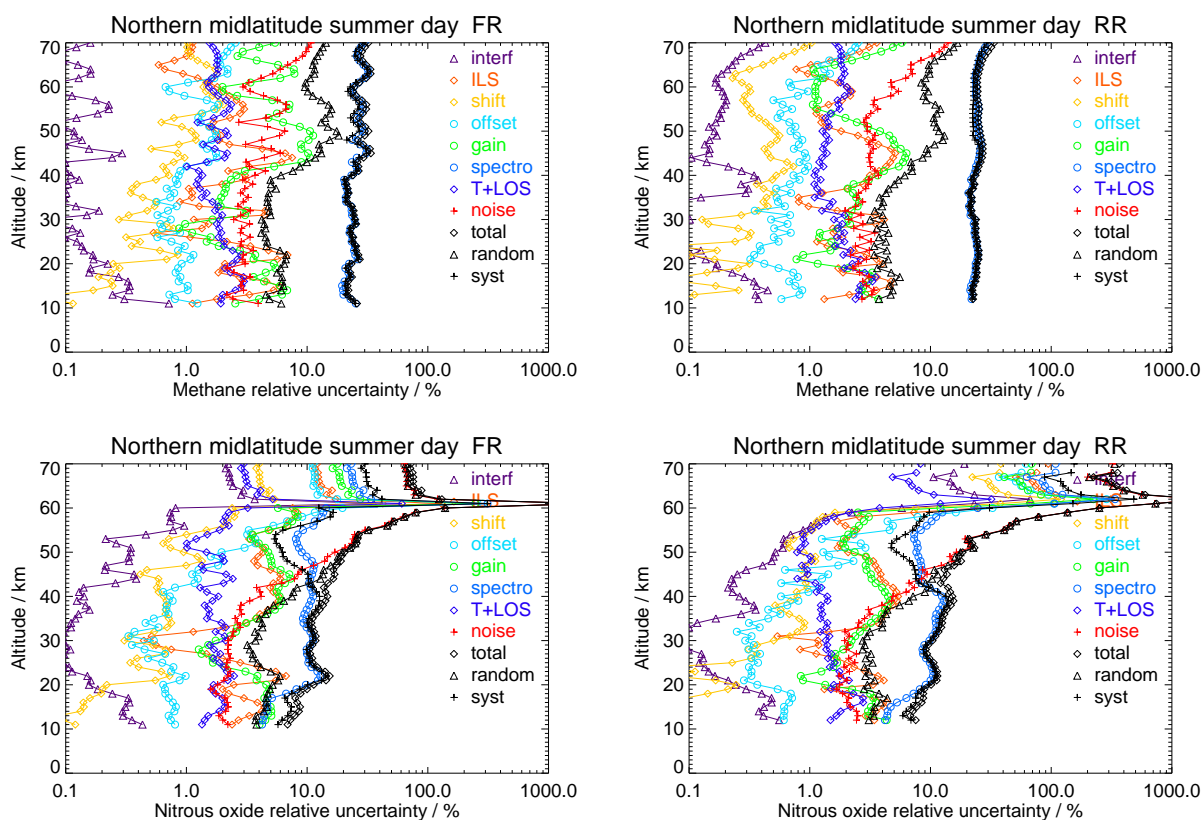
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Figure 1. Top row: CH_4 error budget for daytime northern midlatitude summer conditions for FR (left) and RR (right) data, shown as percentage of the respective mean CH_4 profile. All error estimates are 1-σ uncertainties. Error contributions are marked "total", "random" and "syst" for the total, total random and total systematic error, further "T+LOS" for the propagated error from the T+LOS retrieval, "noise" for the error due to spectral noise, "spectro" for the spectroscopic error, "gain" for residual gain calibration uncertainties (MIPAS bands A and B), "shift" for the spectral shift error, "ILS" for the instrument line shape error, "offset" for the error due to spectral offset, and "interf" for the error due to interfering gases. Information on the ingoing uncertainties can be found in the text and in Tables 3 and 4. Bottom row: Same as top row, but for N_2O.
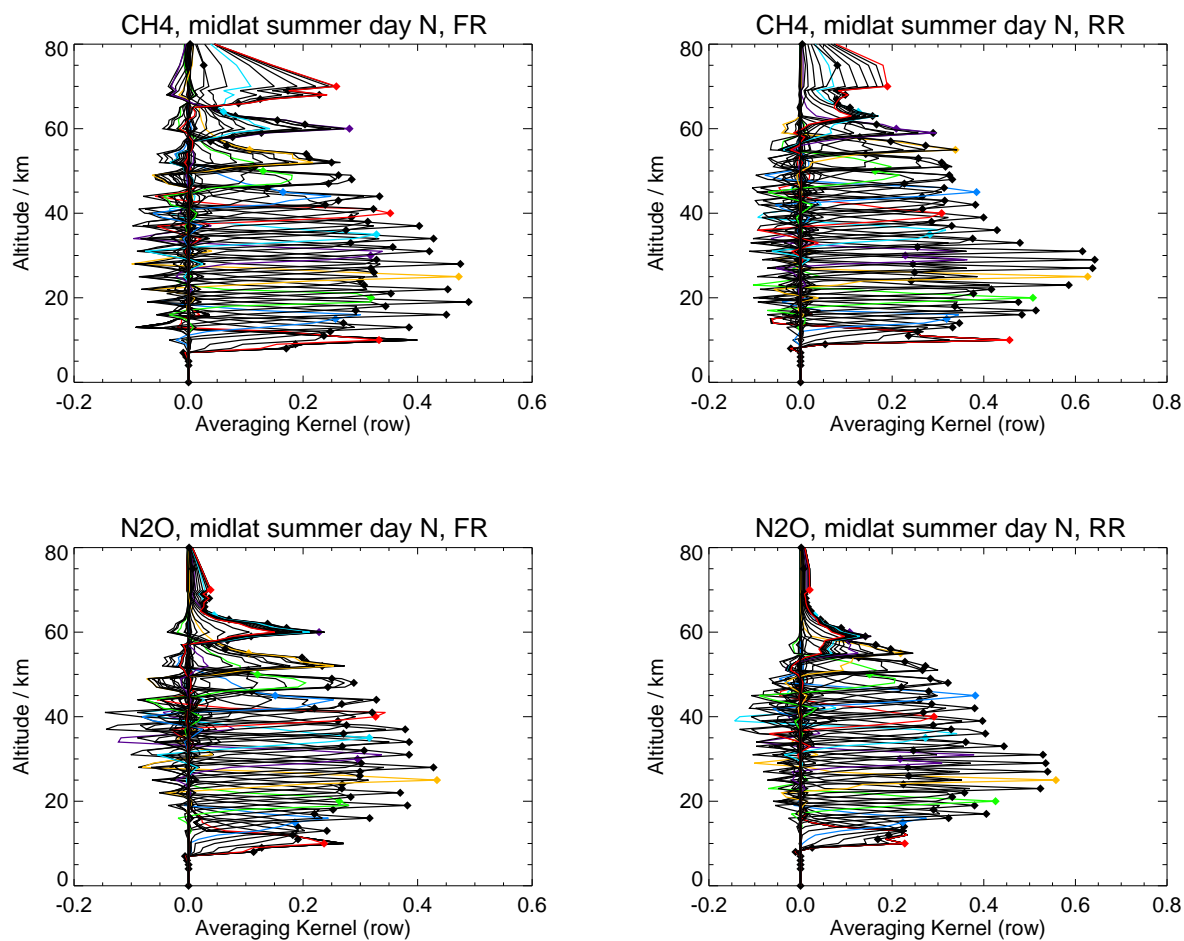
Figure 2. Top row: Rows of the averaging kernels belonging to a CH_4 profile measured at full spectral resolution (FR) at 55.70°N, 170.02°E on 10 October 2003 (left) and to a CH_4 profile measured at reduced spectral resolution (RR) at 41.02°N, 98.74°E on 26 December 2009 (right). Bottom row: Same as top row, but for N_2O. The diamonds indicate the nominal retrieval height. If the nominal retrieval height is located at the peak of the averaging kernel row, there is no vertical information displacement.
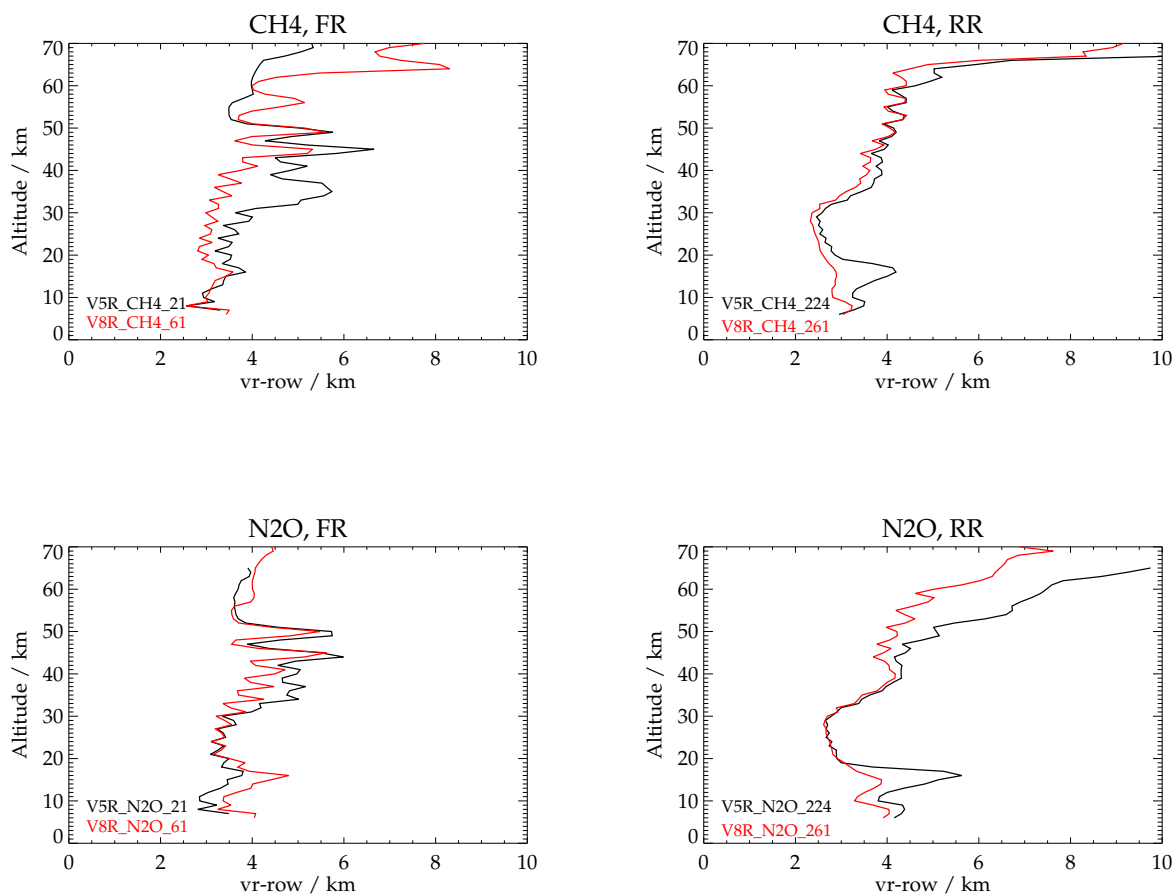
Figure 3. Top left: Vertical resolution of the CH_4 data product V5H_CH4_21 (black) and of the new data product V8H_CH4_61 (red), averaged over orbits 1753-1765 of the full spectral resolution period (FR). Top right: Vertical resolution of the CH_4 data products V5R_CH4_224 (black) and V8R_CH4_261, (red), averaged over orbits 29031-29051 of the reduced spectral resolution period (RR). Bottom row: Same as top row, but for N_2O.
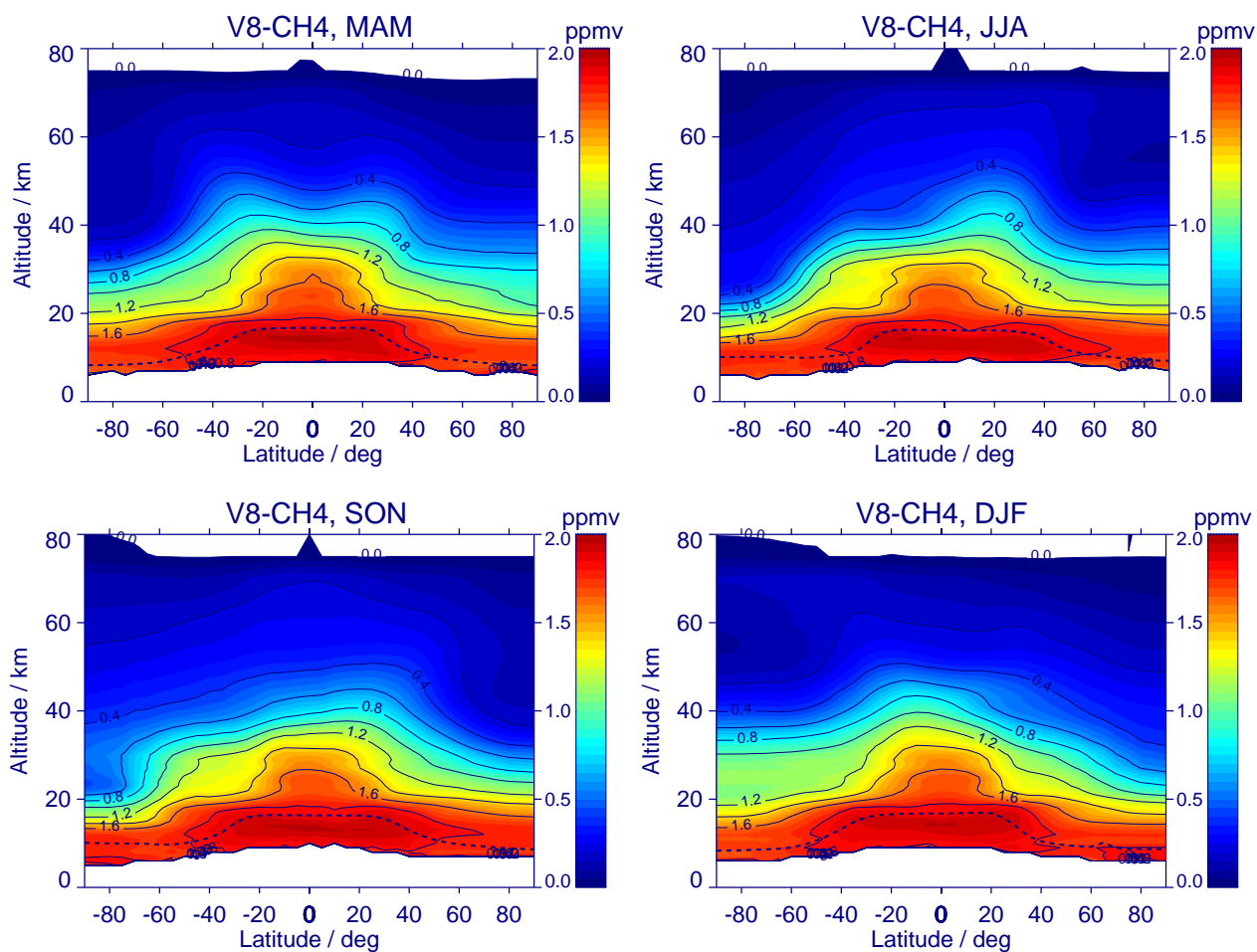
Figure 4. Zonal mean seasonal composites of V8-CH$_4$ retrieved from NOM FR and NOM RR measurements (2002-2012) during March to May (top left), June to August (top right), September to November (bottom left) and December to February (bottom right). The dotted line indicates the seasonal mean thermal tropopause.
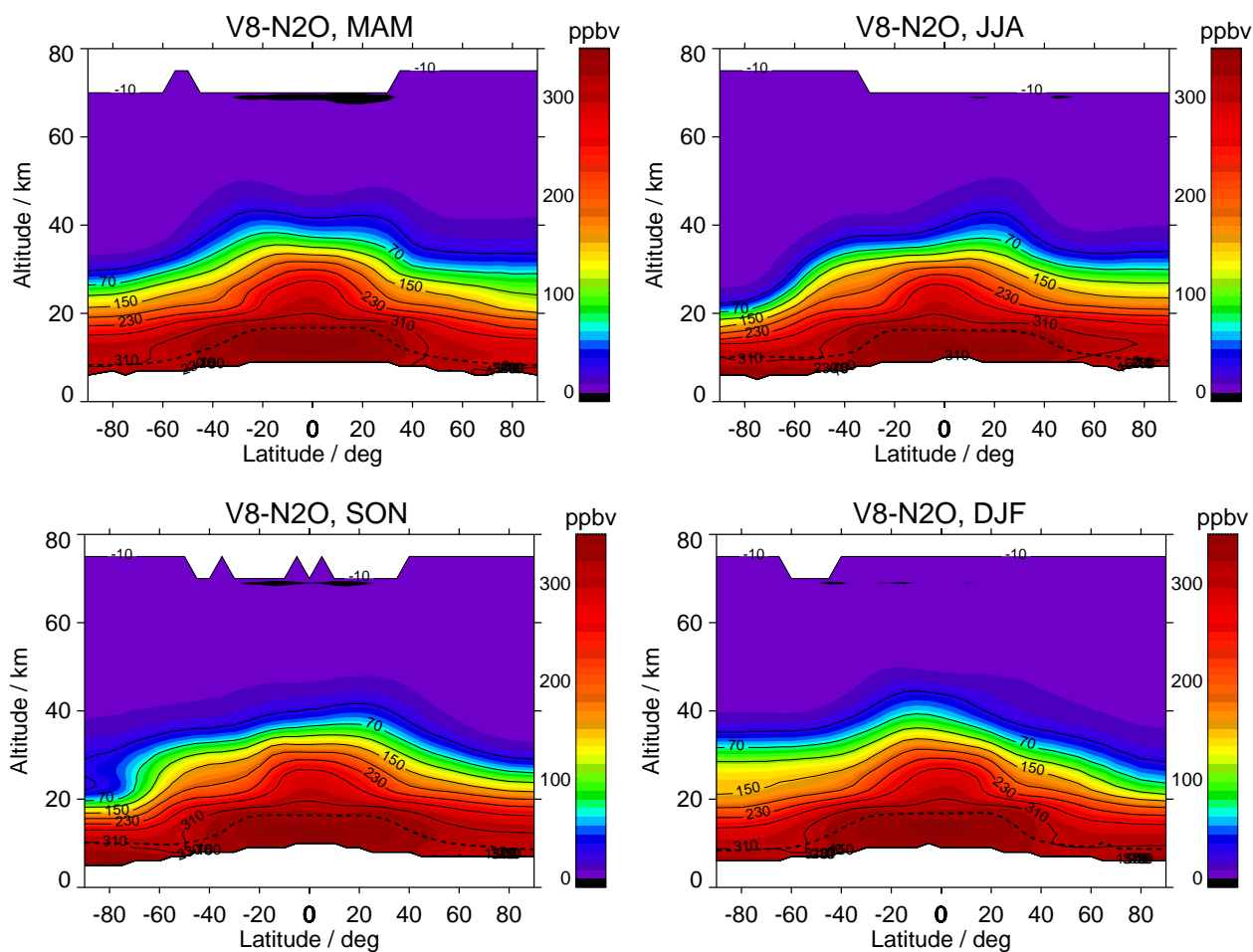
Figure 5. Zonal mean seasonal composites of V8-N$_2$O retrieved from NOM FR and NOM RR measurements (2002-2012) during March to May (top left), June to August (top right), September to November (bottom left) and December to February (bottom right). The dotted line indicates the seasonal mean thermal tropopause.
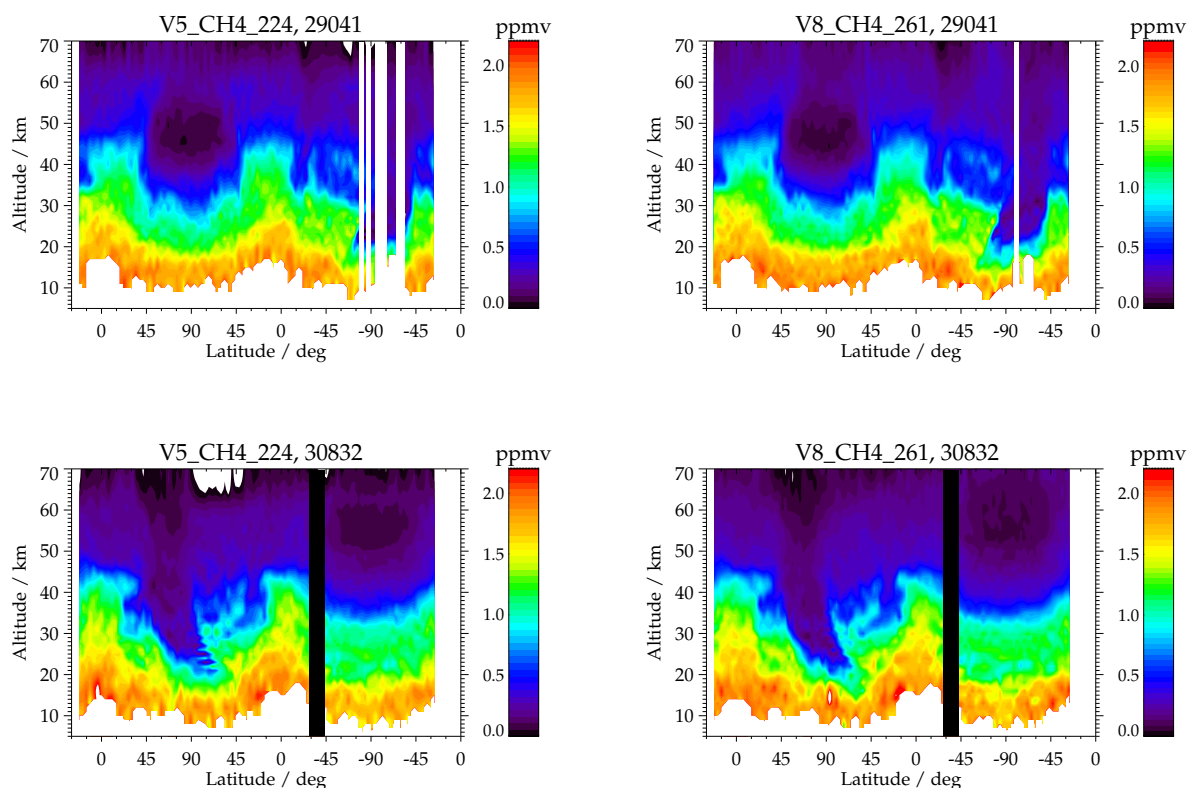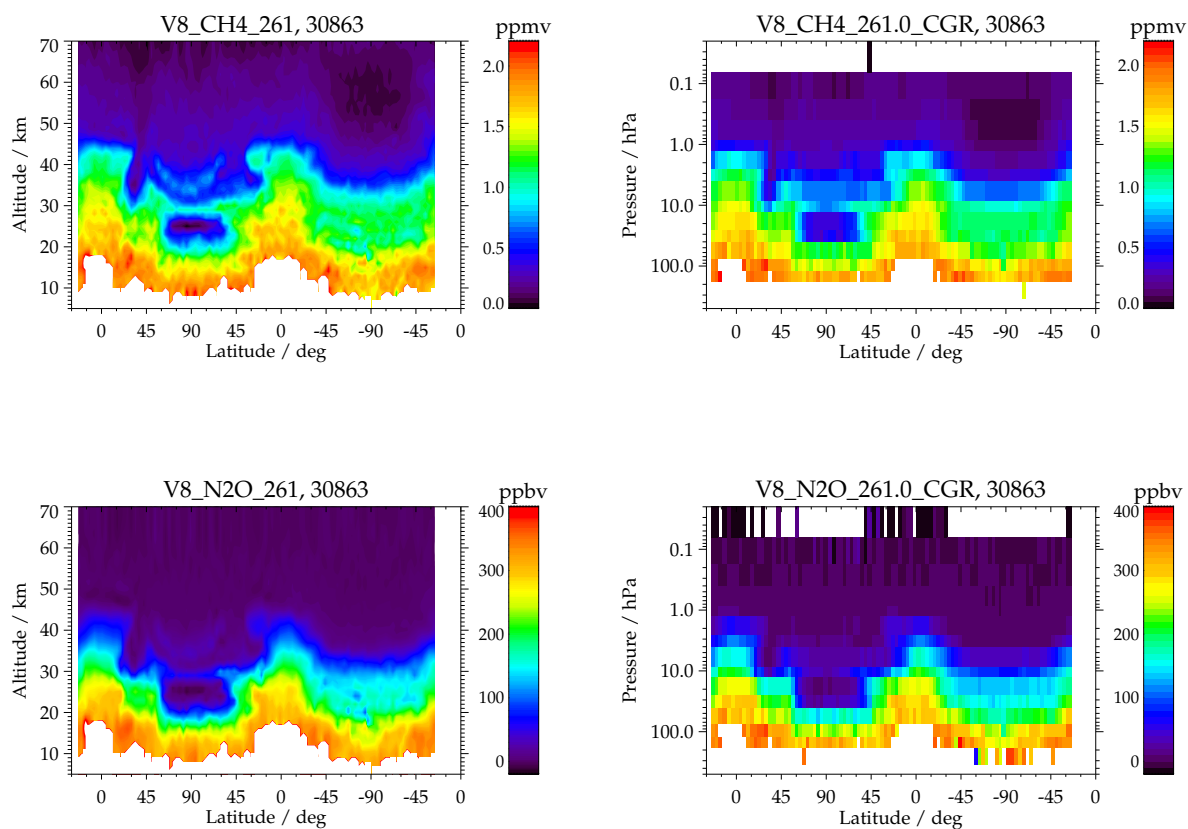
Figure 6. Top left: Latitude-height cross section of CH$_4$ version V5R_CH4_224, measured on 19 September 2007 along orbit 29041. The white areas around 90°S represent scans with not converged retrievals. Top right: Same as left, but for version V8R_CH4_261, where the number of not converged scans has reduced to one. Bottom left: Latitude-height cross section of CH$_4$ version V5R_CH4_224, measured on 23 January 2008 along orbit 30832. Around 70°N at the descending part of the orbit (90°N -> 90°S) there are strongly oscillating profiles. The black bar between 30°S and 45°S indicates a measurement gap. Bottom right: Same as left, but for version V8R_CH4_261. The profiles around 70°N are considerably smoother.
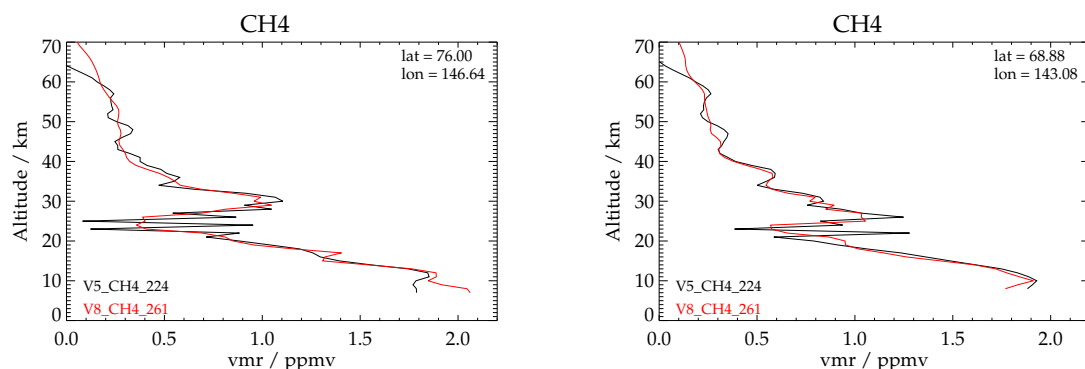
Figure 7. Two CH$_4$ profiles of orbit 30832, obtained at 76.00°N (left) and at 68.88°N (right) with retrieval setups V5R_CH4_224 (black) and V8R_CH4_261 (red). The new retrieval setup including horizontal CH$_4$- and N$_2$O-gradients as well as an oscillation detection in the iteration scheme leads to considerably reduced oscillations.
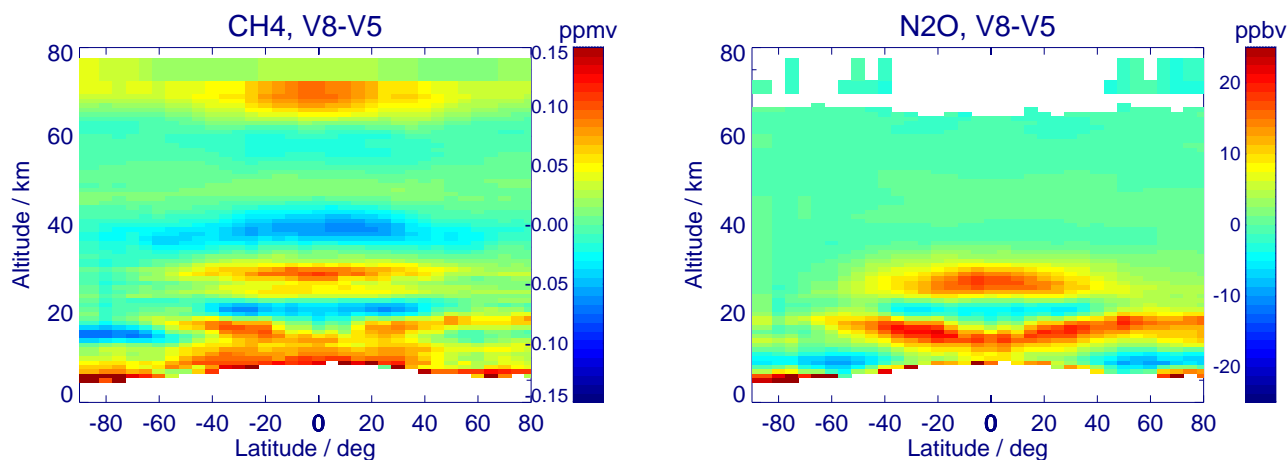
Figure 8. Left: Zonal mean differences between MIPAS V8 and V5 CH$_4$-measurements (V8H_CH4_61, V8R_CH4_161, V8R_CH4_261, V5H_CH4_21, V5R_CH4_120, V5R_CH4_224/225) averaged over the period July 2002 to April 2012. Right: Same as left, but for N$_2$O.

Figure 9. Top left: Latitude-height cross section of standard CH$_4$ retrieval (V8R_CH4_261) from measurements on 25 January, 2008, along orbit 30863. Top right: Corresponding coarse grid retrieval. Bottom row: Same as top row, but for N$_2$O.