```python
In [1]: import xarray as xr
```

```python
In [2]: datadir = 'C:/Users/khana/Documents/Masters/Semester 2/Earth and System Modelling/PLASIM/PLASIM Data/'
        preind_atm = xr.open_dataset(datadir + 'atmo_monthly_postproc.nc')

        variables = list(preind_atm.keys())
        description = ['air temp',
                       'eastward wind',
                       'northward wind',
                       'surface temp',
                       'surface snow thickness',
                       'lwe of large scale precipitation',
                       'convective precipitation rate',
                       'lwe of snowfall amount',
                       'air pressure at sea level',
                       'geopotential height',
                       'relative humidity',
                       'cloud area fraction',
                       'air temp 2m',
                       'surface albedo',
                       'surface net shortwave flux',
                       'surface net longwave flux',
                       'toa net shortwave flux',
                       'toa net longwave flux',
                       'surface eastward stress',
                       'surface northward stress',
                       'lwe of water evaporation'
                       ]

        var_def = []
        for i in range(0,len(variables)):
            var_def.append((variables[i],description[i]))
```

```python
In [3]: var_def
```

```
Out[3]: [('ta', 'air temp'),
         ('ua', 'eastward wind'),
         ('va', 'northward wind'),
         ('ts', 'surface temp'),
         ('snd', 'surface snow thickness'),
         ('prl', 'lwe of large scale precipitation'),
         ('prc', 'convective precipitation rate'),
         ('prsn', 'lwe of snowfall amount'),
         ('psl', 'air pressure at sea level'),
         ('zg', 'geopotential height'),
         ('hur', 'relative humidity'),
         ('clt', 'cloud area fraction'),
         ('tas', 'air temp 2m'),
         ('as', 'surface albedo'),
         ('rss', 'surface net shortwave flux'),
         ('rls', 'surface net longwave flux'),
         ('rst', 'toa net shortwave flux'),
         ('rlut', 'toa net longwave flux'),
         ('tauu', 'surface eastward stress'),
         ('tauv', 'surface northward stress'),
         ('evap', 'lwe of water evaporation')]
```