



## **Journey to Planet Earth**

### **Transcript for Episode 13: EXTREME REALITIES: SEVERE WEATHER, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND OUR NATIONAL SECURITY**

**Complete Version**

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**Journey to Planet Earth is produced by**

**Screenscope, Inc.  
4330 Yuma St, NW  
Washington, DC 20016**

**TEASE**

**UNDERWRITING CREDITS**

*(Opening Sequence)*

REPORTER #1

The countryside is burning up. It is official now. It is the worst drought in a quarter-century.

REPORTER #2

Sandy's effects blasted New York City causing damage and destruction never seen before in America's largest city.

PHIL RADFORD

Climate change is basically putting our weather system on steroids. And the impacts of that can be really severe.

GOVERNOR CUOMO

Anyone who says there's not a dramatic change in weather patterns, I think is denying reality.

SHERRI GOODMAN

We need to understand that we are living in a new normal. That new normal includes more extreme events, more disaster risks.

REPORTER #1

Tonight, the most powerful storm on the planet this year has slammed into the Philippines.

PAUL O'BRIEN

Climate change – erratic weather – pushes people over the edge. It goes very quickly from being a local economic problem to being a local political problem. And when it becomes a local political problem, it becomes a global security problem.

KURT CAMPBELL

So what this has done, in many respects has caused us to redefine and broaden the scope of what national security is.

LESTER BROWN

We have inherited a definition of security from the last century – a century that was defined by two world wars and a cold war.

SHERRI GOODMAN

During the cold war, we wanted to reduce the risk of a nuclear strike on the U.S. homeland. National security is all about reducing risks and threats to our nation. Now we face different risks.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Are the risks associated with extreme weather threatening our national security? Can these events contribute to the fall of political regimes or the strengthening of terrorist groups? And can innovation help us adapt to the new realities of climate change? Please join me now – as we investigate these critical issues.

**EXTREME REALITIES**

**Afghanistan, Near The Pakistan Border**

**A Film By  
Marilyn & Hal Weiner**

**Narrated By  
Matt Damon**

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Christian Parenti is an investigative journalist who reports from the world's most dangerous war zones. When in Afghanistan – he was always accompanied by his translator and colleague – Ajmal Naqshbandi.

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

If ISAF soldiers really murdered this guy when he was wounded, that's pretty significant. That's a war crime. It's frightening but also exciting to report from conflict zones and part of what I find rewarding about is that one has a front row seat for history.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] His most dangerous assignment was an interview with Taliban insurgents near the Pakistani border.

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

Tabul-Kandahar border with the Taliban. Many people say that the Taliban receive support from the Pakistani government. Is the Taliban ... does it receive support from Pakistan? How does it sustain itself?

AJMAL NAQSHBANDI

That man says yes – the Pakistan stands with us and Pakistan is supporting us – they provide us with everything.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Suddenly a military surveillance aircraft approaches.

AJMAL NAQSHBANDI

This aircraft is a detective aircraft.

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

So we should go? Let's go then.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Ten months later, Parenti's friend and colleague was kidnapped by the Taliban. The video of Ajmal's captivity and appeal for freedom was broadcast around the world.

HAMID KARZAI

*[Speaking in Pashto.]*

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] But when Afghan President Hamid Karzai refused to exchange prisoners for Ajmal's release, he was beheaded by the Taliban.

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

Having had a colleague killed by the Taliban – you know – and then researching his death and dealing with his family. The thing that I took away from it was just how much heartbreak is involved in war. The bonds of solidarity get ripped to pieces and the society becomes less and less coherent and more and more distrustful.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Ajmal received a hero's funeral, but the Taliban still retained the allegiance of the local population.

This paradox triggered a question for Parenti. Why did the people continue to support the Taliban? His investigation took him into the poppy fields of Afghanistan.

For centuries, the country was a major source of opium. Yet only fifteen years ago, these fields of poppies were filled with wheat. That was when the Taliban-controlled government banned the growing of opium poppies – declaring it un-Islamic. Overnight, nearly all poppy farming stopped – eliminating nearly three quarters of the world's supply of heroin. But after the Taliban was driven from power in 2001, two things happened – its leaders desperately needed funds to finance its insurgency – and Afghanistan was hit by a prolonged and severe drought.

REPORTER #1

Northern Afghanistan is in the grips of a devastating drought affecting more than a million people.

REPORTER #2

The plains of Northern Afghanistan should be carpeted with crops, but this year there's almost nothing.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Compounding the problem, the extreme weather event left thousands of farmers vulnerable to intimidation by the Taliban.

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

The only crop in Afghanistan that can survive – given the severe drought conditions – is poppy, opium poppy. Poppy uses one-sixth the amount of water that wheat uses. So they turn to poppy because that's a way that you can feed your family under these drought conditions. And there is one side in the war that says we'll defend your right to grow this illegal drug crop and when the eradication squads come in we will attack them; we'll keep them out. And in exchange, you pay taxes when you move your crop out on the roads. If we ask you to, to hide some weapons for us you do that. If – you know – we try and recruit some of your sons to join us, you don't stop us. It is a factor in helping to explain why the Taliban have an endless line of young recruits and why they have pretty significant support among poor Pashtun farmers in southern Afghanistan.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] After discovering how the Taliban took advantage of an extreme weather event to fund its terrorist activities – Parenti decided to leave the war zone to work on a book.

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

I started thinking – this must be bigger than just Afghanistan. This connect between environmental crisis and violence is probably evident in other places and so I went out to investigate how that might play out in other countries.

## Unexpected Consequences

### MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Christian Parenti's research took him to one of the driest and most barren regions in the world.

### CHRISTIAN PARENTI

When I was in northwest Kenya in the Turkana region, the drought had been ongoing for about seven years. You can immediately see the crisis. The thesis of my book is that climate change is already a driver of violence; that this isn't something that's going to happen in the future. It's already happening.

### REPORTER #1

Pastoralism is no longer a viable way of life. The evidence is based on the increasingly deadly cattle raids that are taking place not only here in Kenya but also in South Sudan and other African countries.

### REPORTER #2

A violent attack by cattle raiders leaves 600 people dead, huts burned, food looted, and hundreds of children missing.

### MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Parenti arrived in Kenya just after a herder named Ecu Loreman was killed during a cattle raid.

### CHRISTIAN PARENTI

I open the book with the story of Ecu Loreman, who is about 35 years old. He was a Turkana pastoralist and he had been killed the day before in a cattle raid. Why did this guy die? On the one level, he died because a neighboring tribe came and killed him. But on another level, he died because there is this environmental crisis caused by climate change, which is interacting with pre-existing crises: the legacy of cold war militarism which littered the horn of Africa with cheap weapons; and a legacy of bad economic policies which have stripped local government of their ability to respond to crisis. So now into this context comes the extreme weather of climate change.

### MATT DAMON

[V.O.] The drought also took a heavy toll on herders like Chalis Esney. Without water, his goats couldn't survive. And with no money to replace his livestock, he and his wife were reduced to cutting down acacia trees to make charcoal. Selling for one dollar a bag – it's difficult for a family of six to survive. And illegally cutting down the region's few remaining trees led to tribal conflicts over a rapidly dwindling resource.

### JIM YONG KIM

*[Jim Yong Kim, President, World Bank]*

One of the things that we work on – and this is related to climate change and extreme weather events – is in fragile and conflict affected states, there are so many in the world. And what we find is that everything is more difficult in these fragile and conflict affected states and so of course extreme weather events have an amplified impact.

### MATT DAMON

Those of us living in the wealthier parts of the world must now ask ourselves a basic question – why should we care about what's happening to the herders of Kenya – or the millions of others suffering from the consequences of extreme weather events?

### JIM YONG KIM

It's not just the right thing to do morally; it's actually the right thing to do economically. The development of the poorest countries will lead to an increased prosperity for the entire world.

PAUL O'BRIEN

*[Paul O'Brien, Vice President, Oxfam]*

We can't live in a world anymore where there are forgotten hot spots that are victims of not just climate change but being ignored by the international community in terms of economics and politics.

LESTER BROWN

*[Lester Brown, President, Earth Policy Institute]*

So it's suddenly become a very complex world with this interaction of economic, political and environmental trends interacting in ways that we have not seen before.

ANDREW LIGHT

*[Andrew Light, Senior Adviser on Climate Change, U.S. Department of State]*

When we think about the connection between climate change and national security I think that one of the biggest worries that people have is how extreme weather events, how climate change in general is going to lead to increased refugees around the world.

*(Bangladesh Sequence)*

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Bangladesh is a country of rare and exotic beauty – with exceptional moments of sheer magic. But behind a shimmering mask of myth and legend is a place suffering from extremes.

Bangladesh's population is extreme. Roughly half the population of the United States is packed into an area the size of New York State. Bangladesh's poverty is extreme – with an average family income of less than five dollars a day. And given the unyielding harshness of life, it's no surprise that this is a country with extreme political rivalries, terrorist actions, and outbreaks of public unrest.

Yet Bangladesh's heart and soul is in the lowlands of the rural countryside. Fed by the glacial melt of the Himalayas, this complex highway of rivers and streams carries more water than all the rivers of Europe. This also helps make the land extremely fertile – ideal for the cultivation of rice.

Siraj Miya and his daughters are working a small farm not far from the sea. Their life is hard, but these few acres have sustained the family for generations. And over the years they've learned to cope with the rhythms of nature.

For two months each year, monsoon floods inundate the lowlands – displacing hundreds of thousands until the waters recede. But now the people of Bangladesh are facing an even greater challenge.

Because of global warming, projected sea-level rise threatens to cover 60% of the nation. Over 30 million people could become environmental refugees.

Productive cropland will disappear leaving the country vulnerable to famine. Siraj Miya and his daughters are not anxious to leave their ancestral home. But what choice do they have? And where will they go?

India's response to the threat of refugees is extreme. They are building a barbed-wire fence along the nearly 2,500-mile border with Bangladesh. Manned by thousands of security guards, it's become one of the most dangerous frontiers in the world.

This is their recruitment video. It invites young men to join in a Hollywood-style war designed to keep terrorists from invading India. Bangladeshis see it as India's attempt to stop the flow of environmental and economic refugees. It's called "The Wall of Death" by locals; by the families of refugees killed while crossing or even approaching the border.

But can barbed wire stop tens of millions of people fleeing from the surging waters of sea-level rise? Venkateswar Ramaswamy doesn't think so. He's a community activist helping disenfranchised Bangladeshis living illegally in India.

VENKATESWAR RAMASWAMY

Over the last two decades or so, impoverished Bangladeshis keep coming into India for livelihood. They may be here for just a day, or a few days, or a few months. So for the poor, boundaries don't really matter. When they have to survive, they will scale any boundaries. They will go over them, through them, or under them because poverty does not recognize boundaries.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Bangladesh has never been about half measures. It's always been about extremes. And for those living in a country of extremes – unfortunately there are no immediate answers – no simple solutions.

ANDREW LIGHT

I think that one of the biggest worries that people have is how extreme weather events – how climate change in general – is going to lead to increased refugees around the world. Thirty million people in Bangladesh who are forced to try to move into India – an India which is already building walls against them. Where you're going to have to see some shifts in political borders. We're going to have to see some kind of give and take. We're going to have to see feats of diplomacy we can't quite even imagine.

KURT CAMPBELL

*[Kurt Campbell, Former Assistant Secretary of State]*

If this were one isolated case it would be bad, but it would be perhaps possible for the international community to deal with. But the problem will be that the issues associated with what we might call climate refugees are not going to strike in one place. They're going to strike consequentially around the globe. So it's going to come at us simultaneously in the most multi-faceted way one can imagine.

*(Pakistan Sequence)*

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] And that's exactly what happened in 2010. Extreme weather events hit Russia and Pakistan simultaneously. It started in early July when the jet stream – high-speed winds that circle our planet and influence global weather patterns – did something rarely seen before.

It split in two – with one arm dipping south over the Himalayas where it picked up massive amounts of moisture – before crossing over Pakistan and turbo-charging the annual summer monsoon rains. The world's news media jumped on the story.

REPORTER #1

Floodwaters have devastated a fifth of the country since monsoon rains swept in at the end of July.

REPORTER #2

Officials say they are doing what they can despite swamped roads, washed out bridges, and destroyed communication lines.

REPORTER #3

Fifty thousand people have been rescued, however many are still stranded.

REPORTER #4

As the waters recede for a short time, the extent of the damage is becoming more evident.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Twenty million people were left homeless. Meteorologists called it the most destructive extreme weather event caused by climate change. U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon called it the worst humanitarian disaster in recent history.

BAN KI-MOON

This is what I saw. Village after village washed away, roads, bridges homes destroyed. Crops and livelihoods wiped out. I met women and men with very little in the best of times, awash in a sea of suffering. Have great courage, do not despair, and have a strong sense of hope.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] But after rescue efforts were hampered by a collapsing infrastructure, there was little cause for hope.

REPORTER #5

There is widespread complaint at government inaction.

PAKISTANI MAN

They should come and see the disaster for themselves. People have lost their homes. The weather is bad and there is no alternative shelter. For God's sake, if the government can hear me, come and help us.

PAUL O'BRIEN

People on the ground are suffering. They want help and they will look for help anywhere that they can get it – including from organizations that the United States views as terrorists.

REPORTER #6

While floodwaters continue to ravage Pakistan, the Taliban is calling on foreign aid workers to stay away or possibly face violence.

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

The Pakistani Taliban took advantage of this, as many insurgent movements throughout history have. They took advantage of a natural disaster by reaching out as they could to assist the people and win hearts and minds – build good will.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] The United States also responded with humanitarian help.

REPORTER #7

The U.S. embassy has said U.S. marine helicopters have arrived in Pakistan to join relief and rescue operations in areas hit by massive floods in the country's worst catastrophe.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Relief efforts quickly became a battle between the Taliban and the U.S. military to win the hearts and minds of the flood victims.

REPORTER #8

Here many are starving. So there is a rush when a convoy of food arrives. But it's not the Pakistani government who sent the aid, but an Islamic fundamentalist group.

REPORTER #9

Many people have ended up in aid camps like this one, run by influential Islamists growing in popularity.

REPORTER #10

The Pentagon's humanitarian effort, known as "Task Force Raptor" is expected to continue for several weeks. U.S. officials are hoping the immediate response to the crisis will help improve America's poor image among a skeptical Pakistani public.

PAUL O'BRIEN

When you see climate change impacting weather patterns in a place like Pakistan you have not just a local agricultural problem – which you have – a local humanitarian problem – which you have – but you also have potentially a global security threat.

KURT CAMPBELL

An early indicator of what power and influence will look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be countries and institutions that are prepared to move rapidly – early in a crisis – to provide transportation, food, welfare to really beleaguered populations going forward. This will be in some respects a competition for hearts and minds and it's up to the United States, our allies and friends to be better equipped to be able to deal with these humanitarian challenges that flow rather directly from climate change.

*(Russia Sequence)*MATT DAMON

[V.O.] As Pakistan's balance of power continued to be challenged by the unprecedented flood, thousands of miles to the north Russia was also hit by an extreme weather event.

It was caused by the same shift in the Jet Stream that led to the Pakistani flood. However, this time it brought drought, heat waves, and thousands of wildfires racing across Russia. For months, volunteers struggled to save hundreds of smoldering towns and villages.

The nation's capital was soon blanketed with toxic smoke. It wasn't quite the welcome tourists were expecting. Compounding the problem, Moscow was also caught in a sweltering heat wave. Historians said temperatures were the highest in 500 years.

LESTER BROWN

If someone had said in early 2010 that the temperature in Moscow would actually go above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, I would have had trouble believing that because temperatures never get close to that in Moscow. So we're beginning to see what extreme weather events could be like.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] As the heat wave lengthened, many stayed indoors to escape breathing the choking air. Ultimately 56,000 deaths were attributed to a combination of wildfires, smog, and extreme heat.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] And while Moscow coped with a health crisis, the drought of 2010 left farmers without rain for months. Wheat and corn crops withered in the searing heat.

LESTER BROWN

Crop ecologists who study the relationship between temperature and grain yields, point out that for each one degree Celsius, 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit, rise in temperature, we can expect a 10% decline in grain yields. At the beginning of the summer the Russians were hoping for a harvest of close to 100 million tons of grain, which is what they get when they have a good harvest. But after that heat wave, they ended up with a harvest of 60 million tons. So they lost 40% of the grain harvest.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] One of the largest exporters of grain was on the brink of a massive crop failure. To keep domestic prices stable, Vladimir Putin banned all grain exports.

***(“Arab Spring” Sequence)***

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] The news stunned the world's commodity markets. And when other key wheat exporting countries reported similar shortages because of drought, the price of grain skyrocketed. Hardest hit was the Middle East, which included nine of the ten largest wheat-importing countries in the world. Within months, soaring bread prices and food shortages rocked the Arab world.

ANDREW LIGHT

I mean who can forget these, these incredible images of people waving pieces of bread on the protest lines in places like Tunisia and Syria. People were coming out to these protests who normally might have not been drawn into the political turmoil – might have hesitated – but they are in desperate straits.

WOMAN

We are tired, man. We are tired. Stop the price hikes. We are suffering. We are Egyptians. We love Egypt. Stop this. We want to eat. We want to live, we and our children.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] What started out as a protest against the price of food caused by a severe drought soon escalated into a protest against a wide range of economic and human rights issues. It became – what the news media quickly labeled – the “Arab Spring.”

LESTER BROWN

The “Arab Spring,” as it were, was where a combination of trends came together. One of which was rising grain prices. Another is a loss of hope. People are not seeing the progress, the economic progress, that can sustain a prosperous society.

REPORTER #1

Violence on the streets in Algiers as chronic levels of unemployment and now a sudden hike in food prices have whipped up anger.

MAN #1

We’ve had enough of this government. We’ve been suffering for ten years and in ten years time it’ll be the same.

REPORTER #2

Boiling point in the northern Egyptian city of Mahala. An estimated 2,000 people took to the streets, setting fires and looting shops and throwing bricks at riot police.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Joining the demonstrations was the outlawed Sunni Islamist group known as the Muslim Brotherhood. Once its slogan was “*Islam Is The Solution.*” Suddenly it was “*Give Us Our Daily Bread.*”

**Tahrir Square, Cairo**  
**January 25, 2011**

REPORTER #3

Central Cairo a battlefield. Shortly after one o'clock in the morning, police moved in.

REPORTER #4

More than nine hours after protests began earlier this morning the momentum is clearly still there. Thousands of people are still gathered in a famous Tahrir square in downtown Cairo. Many are saying they're willing to even overnight here in the cold on the street if that's what it takes for their voices to be heard.

MAN #2

They shot at us. They shot at us. Why? I do not know. Who are we, the enemy? Am I an enemy of the state? I came here to ask just for rights. I came here to ask for a home. For a dignified life. For a regime in power for 30 years to go away.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] How could this have happened? Could an extreme weather event – coupled with a series of economic and human rights protests – contribute to the fall of political regimes and threaten the stability of an entire region?

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

*[Christian Parenti, Author/Journalist]*

“Arab Spring” at first glance didn't seem to have much to do with climate change but it does. One of the ways that climate change helped cause the “Arab Spring” was through the spike in basic grain prices that happened between 2010 and 2011. When people can't get the basic necessities of life, they riot. There were also all these basic economic demands about the rising cost of living, which were linked to the price of imported grain. It's not to reduce the “Arab Spring” to a matter of climate change but you could see how that food price spike was a trigger.

JAMES WOOLSEY

*[James Woolsey, Former Director, CIA]*

The problem is that in this day and age with the world tied to some extent by a possibility of different types of climate catastrophe – with it tied by the Internet – with it tied by international trade – we have an awfully hard time staying away from other countries' problems. We can ignore them if we want, but they may get worse.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Let's take a closer look at these protesters – the hungry – the poor – and the angry. Extreme weather events have made their fragile lives more fragile. But they are not alone in their vulnerability. Far from the streets of the Middle East – climate change is now threatening the security of our planet's wealthiest nations.

**The Next Big Gold Rush**MATT DAMON

[V.O.] The Arctic is home to one of the most hostile environments on Earth. Yet it is here in this seemingly barren and remote wilderness – that we are seeing the earliest and most extreme effects of global warming.

THOMAS R. ARMSTRONG

*[Thomas R. Armstrong, Global Change Program, Office of the President]*

The Arctic is the bellwether of change. There's a lot of talk about what that Arctic will look like in the future and what different countries interests are in that changing Arctic.

SHERRI GOODMAN

[\[Sherri Goodman, Former Deputy Undersecretary of Defense\]](#)

The sea ice in the Arctic is melting at a rate faster than has been predicted by scientists and temperatures are warming.

KEYA CHATTERJEE

[\[Keya Chatterjee, Climate Scientist, WWF\]](#)

The changes that we've seen in the top of the planet, in the polar ice cap, have been far greater than any models ever predicted. And that's scary because that ice is ten feet deep and takes millions of years to build up. So once it disappears in one year, it doesn't just come back the next year even if it's cold. It's a thin veneer that comes back.

HEIDI CULLEN

[\[Heidi Cullen, Chief Climatologist, Climate Central\]](#)

But it creates opportunities. You've got countries that are looking at all of the natural resources that sit under the Arctic Ocean – oil reserves – and it has become sort of the next big gold rush.

[Northern Coast of Russia](#)MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Except it isn't gold that everyone's after. One of the world's largest oil platforms is being towed out to sea. Called the *Prirazlomnaya* – when it begins production, Russia will become the first country to drill for oil above the Arctic Circle. What's at stake is 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil. For Russia – the world's largest exporter of oil – this is not a trivial resource.

This is not the first time Russia claimed portions of the Arctic. In 2007, a Russian submarine planted a flag on the floor of the North Pole. Though dismissed as a publicity stunt, Russia is once again signaling it's intent to exploit the resources of the Arctic.

PHIL RADFORD

[\[Phil Radford, Executive Director, Greenpeace USA\]](#)

The Arctic is scary. People are looking at the oil reserves up there and saying we want that. And it's gotten to such an extreme that leaked documents from the state department through Wikileaks indicated that the Russian government is thinking about militarizing the Arctic more and is saying that they aren't ruling out that there will be armed conflicts.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] In one of the most controversial Wikileaks document a Russian diplomat declares: "The twenty-first century will see a fight for resources and Russia should not be defeated in this fight." The leaked document quickly caught the attention of the news media.

REPORTER #1

A Wikileaks cable seen by News Night show that behind the scenes, governments have been scrambling to carve up the Arctic's oil, gas, and other resources as they're uncovered by the rapidly retreating ice.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Even Russia's English language television station carried the story.

REPORTER #2

Despite Russia saying its interests in the Arctic are purely scientific and resources-oriented, a defense ministry source claims the country plans to station troops there.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Every Arctic nation – the United States, Canada, Norway, Denmark, and Russia – has increased its military presence or carried out war games in the region.

CHUCK HAGEL

*[Chuck Hagel, Secretary of Defense]*

The United States takes its responsibilities as an Arctic nation very seriously. We will remain prepared to detect, deter, prevent, and defeat threats to our homeland and we will continue to exercise U.S. sovereignty in and around Alaska.

SHERRI GOODMAN

We need to understand there is a new geo strategy, a new geo politics of the Arctic that is going to emerge in the coming decades. The U.S. needs to understand its role in both protecting the fragile resources of the Arctic and understanding it's geo-strategic importance.

CHUCK HAGEL

Throughout human history, mankind has raced to discover the next frontier. And time after time, discovery was swiftly followed by conflict. We cannot erase this history. But we can assure that history does not repeat itself in the Arctic.

JAMES WOOLSEY

It remains to be seen whether or not there will be strife or either political or worse in the Arctic. Russia is behaving very imperialistically with respect to energy. They use it to dominate Eastern Europe. And you could have strife in the Arctic of one kind or another.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Though it is still too soon to predict conflict over the Arctic – the *Prirazlomnaya* continues its journey out to sea. The world is watching closely – so is an environmental organization called Greenpeace.

[200 Miles Above The Arctic Circle](#)

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Aboard the Arctic Sunrise, a team of Greenpeace activists are getting ready for a non-violent act of civil disobedience. Everyone knows the mission will be risky and dangerous. Their target is the *Prirazlomnaya*. It is now the first drilling rig ever located above the Arctic Circle. When the crew maneuvers the ship to within a mile of the drilling platform – their action begins.

The team deploys four inflatable zodiacs. The plan is to board the oil platform and drop a banner protesting drilling in the Arctic and the burning of fossil fuels.

Armed security guards are quick to respond. It doesn't take long before the confrontation escalates. The climbers are now caught in the crossfire. For hours they manage to hold off the security forces. A Russian cruiser suddenly fires warning shots over the bow of the Arctic Sunrise. The captain issues an ultimatum.

RUSSIAN BOAT CAPTAIN

Arctic Sunrise. You stop your vessel or heave to.

ARCTIC SUNRISE CAPTAIN

We are on a peaceful voyage in order to protest against the threat to the planet.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] The Russians respond with force. Armed commandoes storm the ship and arrest the crew. The non-violent protest has come to an end. But a question lingers: what compelled these activists to take such risks – to put their lives in jeopardy – and how is their protest connected to threats against our national security?

This is what environmentalists fear about drilling in the Arctic. Harsh conditions like these will surely lead to a major oil spill. And the remote location of the polar region makes it impossible to respond in time to prevent an ecological disaster.

THAD ALLEN

*[Thad Allen, Former Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard]*

The Arctic is particularly challenging for any type of a contingency response. The first problem is what I would call the “tyranny of distance.” If you look at the North Slope of Alaska in relation to U.S. territory, the nearest deep water ports that you can get to are close to a thousand miles away. You have the lack of infrastructure. You have challenges related to communication and navigation. All those combined make it a very challenging environment.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] But for Greenpeace the over-riding issue is the world's continued reliance on fossil fuels – a finite resource that precipitated the melting of the Arctic.

PHIL RADFORD

Sometimes problems become so great, sometimes you know people need to stand up to say we don't want the next war that our kids will die in to be over oil in the Arctic. We don't want our next war to be in Iraq over oil. Or we don't want our kids to live in a world where they have to worry about extreme weather events or they have to worry about the Midwest no longer being able to grow the grain that we all rely on.

CAROL BROWNER

*[Carol Browner, Former EPA Administrator]*

The problem with climate change is if we wait until we can see and feel and touch it, it may be too late. But we're smart people and we know this and what we need to do is find the political will and the moral and ethical courage to take the steps that we can take today to begin to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause this problem.

JIM YONG KIM

If we reflect the real cost of sending carbon into the air through market mechanisms then we will put less carbon in the air. We, we know that that's the case. But that's going to require a lot of conversation and global agreements that may be difficult to get to.

THOMAS FRIEDMAN

*[Tom Friedman, Author/Journalist]*

For me the critical way to motivate people on this issue is to present climate as a challenge – a life and death challenge to be sure – but also an incredible opportunity.

PAUL O'BRIEN

There are a lot of great ideas out there. There are good solutions to help people respond to climate change, to be more resistant to drought to deal with low rainfalls. The communities are ready.

## **Glimmers of Hope**

### MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Here in a small village in the West African country of Benin, Robert Freling gets a hero's welcome. Several years ago he helped save this town from famine by bringing electricity to farmers in need. Before electricity arrived the dry season was so severe that nothing would grow. Today, solar energy powers an electric pump that draws water from streams and wells that irrigate the fields.

### ROBERT FRELING

When I came the first time three years ago these women were watering the plants by hand with these small gourds. They were spending a lot of time walking from the well to the garden – very limiting in terms of what they could do.

### MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Thanks to solar power the women can now irrigate their fields and feed their families year round. They also earn money by selling their crops in the local market.

### ROBERT FRELING

*[\[Executive Director, Solar Electric Light Fund\]](#)*

What we've done in Benin – bringing solar powered drip irrigation to now ten villages – is providing food security to approximately 50,000 people. A drop in the bucket, but clearly this solution has a potential to be replicated and expanded to many other parts of the developing world.

### JIM YONG KIM

Working in these fragile and conflict affected states is critical. We need to make sure that they can grow their economies and create the jobs that will lead to stability and in the context of climate change we must make sure that the most fragile and most conflict affected states have the means to respond to the extreme weather events that will undoubtedly happen.

### THOMAS FRIEDMAN

What concerns me from a national security point of view is energy technology – ET –is going to be the next IT. And whichever country owns ET is going to have the most energy security, national security, innovation security. I want to see the earth race a competition between America and Russia, Russia versus Japan, China versus India over who can invent the most green technologies so men and women can stay here on earth. That's a race that we can actually all win. And – in fact – if we don't all win, we're all going to lose it.

### CARL HEDDE

*[\[Carl Hedde, Munich Re America\]](#)*

We need to become a climate-ready nation and we could stop debating what's causing it. I think we see it. We're seeing it happen. Now how do we get ready for it and how do we make our less ourselves less susceptible to the impact of climate and weather that we're seeing these days?

### MATT DAMON

[V.O.] New green technologies come in many forms. In a testing facility in South Carolina engineers simulate conditions found in wildfires, hurricanes and windstorms. Their goal is to design structures that can withstand the challenges of extreme weather.

### CARL HEDDE

Our homes need to be built stronger. We need to build safer communities – safer businesses. We have to adapt to the new reality.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Two seemingly identical houses are built side-by-side. One is constructed to code; the other has a few added low-cost features that provide structural strength. Using a series of synchronized wind and rain machines the engineers create winds up to one hundred and thirty-five miles per hour – conditions equal to a category three hurricane. But when the winds reach ninety-five miles per hour the results are clear – there are ways to adapt to the challenges of climate change.

In the Netherlands, two thirds of the population live below sea level. Yet over the years, the Dutch have learned to adapt to floods and storm surges. Engineers built a combination of seawalls, floodgates and moveable barriers to protect lives and property – and architects designed homes that can float in times of extreme flooding or rising seas.

Without question, state-of-the-art sea walls, climate-ready buildings, and new energy technologies can ease the burden of extreme weather events, which continue to threaten places like Pakistan and Bangladesh, New Orleans, and New York. But adaptation comes with a hefty price tag. And since inaction is not a realistic option, we are left with major decisions.

ANDREW LIGHT

We have to decide whether or not we're going to build bigger sea walls, invest in things like wetlands or more coastal zones that would be able to absorb surges from storms.

JIM YONG KIM

Damage along coastal areas as a result of extreme weather events costs us about 6 billion dollars a year. Now that's a lot of money but by 2050 our estimation is that cost is going to go up to one trillion dollars a year. But if we start today investing 50 billion dollars a year, we can prevent that one trillion dollar loss. Imagine what we could do with an extra 950 billion dollars in 2050.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Imagine if we invested those funds today. Imagine cities powered by clean sources of electricity. Urban landscapes designed to withstand the extremes of weather – with green spaces – less cars – more mass transit – and even urban farms that could feed entire cities. A future not based on fossil fuels that emit greenhouse gases but rather a future run on renewable sources of energy. Simply put, if we change the way we treat our planet, we can ease the pressures of climate change that threaten the stability and security of all nations – rich and poor.

**Epilogue**MATT DAMON

[V.O.] In Afghanistan, the Taliban is more reliant on opium poppy financing than ever before. While in Pakistan the insurgency gains in the fight to win the hearts and minds of the people.

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

It's almost like a kind of cancer that sets in from endemic insurgency and endemic ethnic conflict.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Though the heat wave in Russia abated and the spike in the global grain prices fell – serious questions still confront us.

LESTER BROWN

We can't anticipate the sorts of changes that lie ahead. But we now know that heat waves like this can come at any time.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] The “Arab Spring” led to the fall of repressive regimes. But shortages of food and water remain and the region continues to suffer from political upheaval.

JAMES WOOLSEY

And it’s too soon to tell how it’s going to end up. Whether the countries that have overthrown dictators such as Egypt are going to go on to build a sensible, reasonable, secular society and have a sound economy or not.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] In India – the barbed-wire border fence is nearly complete – creating a trigger point for future violence.

VENKATESWAR RAMASWAMY

A kind of rage builds up, and it just needs small sparks to set it on fire and riots can break out.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] Remember the herders of Kenya? Well things are slowing improving after some villages received solar powered water pumps to help their livestock survive the dry months.

ROBERT FRELING

One of the best antidotes to terrorism that we can address in the developing world is to find ways of providing access to water giving them an opportunity and reasons for hope in the future.

MATT DAMON

[V.O.] While the nations of the world debate how best to carve up the resources of the Arctic – the Greenpeace activists – released after three months in jail – continue to travel around the world protesting the burning of fossil fuels.

JIM YONG KIM

The big issue is that we have to tackle climate change. We’ve really got to do everything we can to prevent the rise of temperatures.

THOMAS FRIEDMAN

Whoever can get 192 countries in the world to all agree on verifiable limits in reductions of their CO-2 emissions, may God bless them and keep them. I will be rooting for them and applauding for them. But myself I’d like to put my bet on the engineers and the innovators.

CAROL BROWNER

I think if we’re going to solve this problem, it’s going to take a combination. It’s going to take the grassroots. It’s going to take people demanding of their elected, their appointed officials, that we put in place the right kind of protections. It’s going to take industry stepping and doing the right thing.

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

What we need in the face of climate change are functioning societies where people trust each other and can build institutions that are accountable that can work for the common good.

## Final Thoughts

### MATT DAMON

[V.O.] This is the new normal. In a world besieged by more severe weather events than ever in recorded history, we cannot ignore the new reality that climate change has become a major foreign policy issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our greatest need is to find the will to change. Our greatest hope is to harness the energy of people everywhere.

It presents us with an enormous challenge to find the right balance between what we want and what nature can safely provide. Though separated by distance and culture – for the more than seven billion people [SYNC] who draw sustenance from the resources of the world – there are common bonds – bonds that are renewed by each generation – bringing new ideas – new attitudes – new hope. [V.O.] Planet Earth – this is our home – this is where our journey of discovery must begin.

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In Association With  
SOUTH CAROLINA ETV

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Washington, DC 20016

**Major Funding Provided By:**  
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**Additional Funding Provided By:**  
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