

Our Earth

By Felix Schweikhardt

The Earth from the universe: Isn't it wonderful? Vulnerable and graceful at the same time, it floats through the never-ending vastness of space. The orbit has the perfect distance to the sun, the atmosphere protects us from dangerous radiation and the winds give us a comfortable climate. The



interaction between the different spheres fits very well. Plants provide the oxygen for the atmosphere needed by animals and humans. The atmosphere and the rocks provide the soil with water and nutrients needed by plants. With the energy from the sun, life could develop on our lovely planet. The never-ending blue of the ocean is in accord with the gentle green and brown of the land. All covered by the playful games of the clouds. Humans settled since early times at the fertile shores of rivers and seas, in sheltered places by mountains or in charming forests. In accordance with the nature, man hunted, fished and cultivated crops.

What a wonderful place to live! But also the only one we have. Without the conveniences of the earth, nobody could live for one second.

Nevertheless, the earth sometimes shows its power. Volcanic eruptions can cause ice ages and sentence whole cities to death, earthquakes engulf buildings and kill people by falling stones, floods set whole cities underwater, avalanches bury people, towns and valleys and hurricanes cause damages accounting to billions. This shows us that you shouldn't play with the planet. But the earth is at risk. Human activities are likely to change the planet forever. The population grows rapidly causing more and more problems like pollution and emissions. More and more energy and resources are needed. The people in southern countries aren't able to cater for themselves. This causes violent conflicts and forest burnings to gain more land for the agriculture. In doing so precious rain forests are lost and the deserts sprawl over wide

areas of Africa intensifying the nutrition problems of the local population. Especially climate change and a nuclear war are a severe threat for the future of our planet. With the current mass of nuclear weapons the earth could be destroyed easily for several times. If the emission of Greenhouse Gases isn't stopped, the earth will come in a very critical situation concerning its climatic stability. Severe storms will occur more often, the sea level rise causes floods and massive erosion for coastal areas destroying fertile land for the agriculture and setting whole cities under water. The global increase of temperature leads to an entire disappearance of glaciers in the middle latitudes and in the arctic sea. The switch of climatic zones causes a loss of natural vegetation, a of forests and wetlands. All this will decrease the amount of plants and animals dramatically. Exotic species will immigrate in regions that are not prepared for them. They will spread rapidly destroying the previous landscape. Some of them are as well a severe threat for humans as they transmit fatal diseases that are able to kill millions of people. All this will lead to more and more people leaving their homeland to search for better living conditions elsewhere. So we have to face a global refugee problem as well.

Humans have changed the appearance of the earth for thousands of years. But today the development of new technologies give the human beings a new global physical power. Combined with old habits this could have terrible impacts on our future life. Our decisions of today are no longer reversible in the future. The principle of trial and error is no longer valid. Should we really allow that the landscape of our planet, formed in billions of years, is totally changed in a few decades?

We have the earth in our hands. But we have also the possibility to protect it. We know how sustainable development works. We know how we can use renewable energy sources. We know how we could help and develop the poorer regions.

This gives us a responsibility for that also future generations, that all people of the earth can experience its beauty. That our grandchildren can listen to the songs of the birds, that they can experience the sweetness of a sunset on the sea, that they can see the gorgeousness of a rainbow. Isn't it a wonderful feeling to leave home in the mornings, to walk over the fresh grass where dew drops reflect the bright sunlight and to listen to the cheerful songs of the birds? Isn't it a wonderful feeling to cycle to the coloured forests in the autumn, to sight the squirrels and deers preparing for the winter and to feel the convenient rustling of the wind in the leaves? Let's fight for these feelings, let's fight for our planet. It's so beautiful. And it's the only one we have.