

## **AN ASTRONAUT'S VIEW ON PROTECTING THE EARTH**

French astronaut Thomas Pesquet, who has recently become a UN Food and Agricultural Organization Goodwill Ambassador, spent six months aboard the International Space Station last year. Long periods with his feet off solid ground gave him a unique and privileged perspective on our planet. His Instagram account is bursting with beautiful images of “the blue ball we call home.” But the beauty is tainted. Pesquet says that even from space the effects of climate change are visible, with glaciers visibly retreating, and a rise in extreme weather events. [...]

“When you look at the Earth from the space station, he adds, it’s absolutely magical. [...] It is absolutely breathtaking the first time you see it. It’s the most beautiful scenery you could possibly imagine.

When you’re on the Earth, you feel that everything is vast, that everything is endless. You have a hard time understanding how limited we are, whereas, when you take a step back and you see the Earth in its entirety, you suddenly understand that we live in an oasis in the cosmos. All around us is nothing, no life, blackness, emptiness – apart from this blue ball with everything we need to sustain human life, and life in general, which is so fragile. It makes you want to cherish the Earth and protect it, particularly because, from space, you can see a lot of the consequences of human activities. The most visible effect is glaciers retreating together with extreme weather phenomena.

And we, up here, can do more than simply observe... First of all, as a space agency, we have satellites that can take precise measures.

Then, the way we deal with our limited resources on board the space station gives us techniques to recycle oxygen and water that could be applied on Earth.

It is all the more important for us to contribute to improving the Earth, as space travel has an impact on the environment. Even though it is negligible when compared to aviation, cars or other industries. We need activity in space to get satellite research done. This benefits the planet a lot. So space travel is a necessary evil.

Besides, if we set ourselves on the right path, there’s nothing we cannot do. We built this unbelievable facility in space for good reasons. We’re using it every day, in peaceful cooperation between countries that were not always friends. So if we can transfer that model to the way we deal with the environment on Earth, I think we’ll get there.

We’re creative enough, we have the technology and we have the will. So, I’m optimistic for the future. If we can make a space station fly, then we can save the planet.”

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