

46th anniversary of Earth Day, which was started by our former colleague Senator Gaylord Nelson. He did that because he recognized it is important for this country to recognize our global responsibilities to our environment and to our future.

There is no greater challenge that we face than climate change because climate change has been caused, in part, by our own activities here on Earth, by the emission of greenhouse gases. We have a responsibility to reverse the current trends. We can do that.

Tomorrow in New York City, many leaders will come to sign the COP21 agreement that was negotiated in Paris earlier this year by 16 nations representing 98 percent of the global greenhouse emissions. This is a historic moment.

I want to reflect for a moment about the U.S. leadership that has brought us to this moment in which we now have an agreement among so many countries of the world. We have been trying to do this now for a long time. We have not been successful. At last, the global community has come together with meaningful commitments that will put us on the right path, and the U.S. leadership made this possible.

I want to congratulate President Obama for his leadership on this. I was with Secretary Moniz in Paris. Ten members of the U.S. Senate went to Paris during the COP21 negotiations. We were there less than 48 hours, but I think we were able to broadcast the united support for U.S. leadership for a global commitment.

Secretary of Energy Moniz took us to the exhibit where we saw firsthand U.S. technology that will help us meet the challenges of climate change—how we can produce energy more efficiently and how we can use energy more efficiently. It was U.S. technology, and that technology will be used around the world.

I mention that because U.S. global leadership is critically important to help save our planet from the adverse impacts of climate change, yes, but it also will help our economy. It will help our economy, obviously, in dealing with the effects of climate change but also in U.S. technology being used around the world, creating jobs here in the United States.

This is an urgent issue. If I might, let me first quote from Pope Francis. He said:

The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. . . . I urgently appeal, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. . . . Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political, and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.

I couldn't agree with him more. This is a global challenge with global, grave consequences if we don't get it right.

I see that in my own State of Maryland's Smith Island, which is disappearing into the Chesapeake Bay. I see it in the Chesapeake Bay with the loss of sea grasses because of warmer water temperatures. Sea grasses are critically important to the survival of the Maryland blue crab. I see it in our coastal safety, as we see more and more storms with more consequences.

Recently I traveled to the southern part of Africa, and I had a chance to see from a helicopter the impact of climate change. In the southern part of Africa, they have only two seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. They are now at about one season: the dry season. We were there during the rainy season, and by helicopter we flew over land that should have been part of a pond. Instead, it was dry, no water. We saw the carcasses of animals that couldn't survive because of the drought.

Climate change is real and is affecting our planet. There are vulnerable nations—from the Marshall Islands to Bangladesh and so many others—whose very existence is at risk because of climate change.

This is an urgent issue that requires an urgent response. But here we can make a difference. We can make a difference through conserving and using less energy and producing our energy in a more environmentally friendly way in a carbon-free environment.

I am joined by Congressman DELANEY and many Members of both the House and Senate in saying that the United States should make a commitment to produce at least 50 percent of our electricity through a carbon-free source by the year 2030. We can do that.

Here is the good news. It will not only be good for our environment, it will be good for our economy and good for our national security. Renewable energy sources can be produced here in America. You don't have to depend on the fossil fuels from countries who disagree with our way of life. For the sake of our national security, for the sake of our national economy, there are more jobs in clean energy than there are in fossil fuel industry.

For all those reasons—for our economy, for our security, and for our environment—U.S. leadership in dealing with these solutions can help America's security. Yes, U.S. leadership is absolutely vital. We saw that in COP21. Without U.S. leadership, it could not be done.

Here is where I really call upon our colleagues. I have said this many times on the floor of the Senate. It is a great honor to serve in the Senate; it is a great honor to represent the people of Maryland. Every Congress has tried to add to its record to protect the future generations as it relates to our environment.

The protection of our environment has never been a partisan issue. I would

urge our colleagues to find ways that we can work together to build the legacy of this Congress to further protect our environment for future generations. We should be part of the solution.

Tomorrow is Earth Day. Let's make a difference. With what we see happening in New York and by our actions, let us protect future generations.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator ALEXANDER, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to call up the following first-degree amendments: Merkley amendment No. 3812, Reid amendment No. 3805, and Flake amendment No. 3820; further, that at 11 a.m., on Tuesday, April 26, the Senate vote on the amendments in the order listed and with no second-degree amendments in order prior to the votes, and that there be 2 minutes equally divided prior to each vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT SIGNING AND EARTH DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Some may know that there is a section of the Washington Post called the Kids Post—a section of interesting stories written for kids in the Washington area. The writers ask area grade schoolers about their favorite books, tv shows, hobbies, and sports. Sometimes the kids are asked what they think is one of the biggest problems in the world. Last week, a fifth-grade class in Virginia was asked this question.

About half the class mentioned an environmental problem such as global warming. In other recent editions when this question was asked, climate change is something these young people consistently worry about. It only makes sense.

Failure to do anything about climate change today, when we still have a chance, will leave future generations—our grandchildren and their children—with a changed world—and not for the better.

I know every time I look at my beautiful young grandchildren, I feel a responsibility—a moral responsibility—

to address this problem for them and future generations. It makes me wonder why there are still so many here in this chamber and among the leading Republican Presidential candidates who deny climate change even exists, not to mention refuse to even do anything about it. How will future generations look back upon such denial and obstinance in the face of overwhelming evidence? Not kindly, I expect.

I know that science tells us that our human brains evolved to address more immediate dangers, and slowly evolving dangers, especially ones that may take decades or more to materialize, don't trigger the same sense of importance. But that is not the only thing at work here.

For decades, the fossil fuel industry and those in their pocket have tried to blur the debate—to blur the science—and create divisions among us instead of looking for what we have in common to solve this shared problem. Make no mistake. This is a deliberate campaign financed by the fossil fuel industry, a campaign that peddles the pseudo-science of manufactured doubt.

As we approach Earth Day, all you need to do is look at the daily news to see the destructive impact of climate change. Scientists recently gained an improved understanding of the complex climate science of Antarctic ice, and they showed that, if carbon emissions were to continue unabated over the next few decades, the oceans could rise as much as 3 or 4 feet by 2100. The situation would then grow far worse in the 22nd century and beyond, likely forcing people to abandon many coastal cities. How can any member of the Senate ignore this potentially catastrophic and costly disaster?

Just the other week, scientists announced troubling evidence in the South Pacific that we are reaching a point where many coral reef ecosystems may not be able to adapt to the relentless progression of climate change. Whole ecosystems that affect all of us and our food chain are being impacted.

And just recently, the New York Times reported that forest fires in parts of the United States, from Alaska to New Mexico, were no longer just happening in a single season, as was the case historically. They have become year-around threats. New Mexico has had 140 such fires this year alone, double the number over the same period last year. Such fires have arrived earlier each year, are happening in winters, and in some cases burning all year along. The culprit for the drier conditions leading to these fires? Climate change.

Climate change also has significant national security implications, ones we simply cannot ignore because they will impact our shores. The crisis in Syria and the flow of refugees from unstable parts of the world is an early warning of how humanitarian crises, particularly from less stable parts of our shared planet, are likely to get worse if

we continue to let climate change go unaddressed. Back in 2011, when pro-democracy protests began in Syria, many of those joining were displaced farmers, who had suffered their fourth year of drought made worse by the effects of climate change. The National Academy of Sciences published findings earlier this year showing that extreme drought in Syria between 2006 and 2009 was most likely due to climate change and that the drought was a factor in the uprisings in 2011.

Just last week, Pulitzer Prize Winner New York Times columnist Tom Friedman wrote about massive migration out of parts of West Africa, through the Sahara Desert, to Libya hoping to eventually cross the Mediterranean Sea into Europe. I ask unanimous consent that his April 13, 2016, column "Out of Africa" be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

He writes, "Just as Syria's revolution was set off in part by the worst four-year drought in the country's modern history—plus overpopulation, climate stresses and the Internet—the same is true of this African migration wave."

Friedman further explains that a United Nations official in the region showed him three maps of Africa with an outline around dots clustered in the middle of the continent. The first map showed the most vulnerable regions of desertification, made worse by recent droughts, in Africa in 2008. The second map showed conflicts and food riots in Africa during 2007 and 2008. And the third map showed terrorist attacks in Africa in 2012. All three outlines cover the same territory.

Anyone serving in the U.S. Senate or running for President who claims to be serious about national security simply isn't credible without addressing the long-term threats posed by weak states and climate change in the decades to come.

And now, insurance companies are tuning in because they understand the threat is real and that business assets are at stake. Lloyd's of London, the world's oldest and biggest insurance market, has recognized the threat climate change represents to business assets, risks ranging from property damage to forced displacement to food insecurity. Lloyd's has issued a call for the insurance industry to take into account the effects of climate change in their insurance modeling.

The London School of Economics studied the economic impacts of climate change and put out a new report earlier this month. What they found is that, on a global scale, climate change could cost the world as little as \$2.5 trillion—or, within the range of possibilities, as much as \$25 trillion.

This is not only a problem in the Arctic or Africa or in remote corners of the world. This is a problem close to home for us, right here and right now. In the past 6 years, Illinois has experienced historic storms, floods, and droughts that have caused millions of

dollars in damage. The city of Chicago has been hit by four historic storms in the last 7 years, meaning that the flooding of basements and overflowing of wastewater systems has become an annual event.

Because of climate change, U.S. growing seasons have shifted so drastically that crops which previously could survive only in the southern half of the country can now be successfully grown in northern Illinois. If current global warming trends continue, climate models estimate that Illinois will have a climate similar to that of the Texas Gulf coast by 2100. For Illinois farmers, these changes to the environment have a direct effect on their livelihood.

The need to act is urgent. We are reaching the tipping point. The science is clear; the debate is settled. The destructiveness of climate change is clear and growing. Climate change is a dire threat to the global economy and global stability. It will cause catastrophic consequences for global health, food security, and habitats on land and in the ocean. If we don't act in time, there is no backup plan.

No one nation can do this alone. The good news is that, together, the nations of the world can act to avoid irreversible disaster. President Obama, Secretary of State Kerry, and climate envoy Todd Stern have helped lead the way. The Paris climate agreement is a historic step in that direction. Never before have so many nations come together to tackle this threat. The draft Paris climate treaty was negotiated and adopted by consensus by 195 countries, unprecedented international cooperation in the face of the crisis.

I want to congratulate President Obama for his leadership in this complex but crucial task. He and his team lead the way for an ambitious, balanced, and fair agreement. And I would like to thank Todd Stern for his contributions, steadily working over several years to build up to the success of the Paris negotiations. I wish him and his family well as he retires from the climate envoy position.

Getting 195 countries to consent on the treaty is no small feat, and he achieved all this in the face of so much opposition at home.

The agreement opens for signatures on April 22, Earth Day. The United States and China made a joint announcement that we will be signing the agreement on that day, the earliest possible time. I encourage other nations to follow our lead.

Our generation has a moral obligation to leave the world in at least as good a shape as we inherited from our parents and grandparents. We cannot run away from our responsibility.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[Apr. 13, 2016]

OUT OF AFRICA

(By Thomas L. Friedman)

AGADEZ, NIGER.—It's Monday and that means it's moving day in Agadez, the northern Niger desert crossroad that is the main launching pad for migrants out of West Africa. Fleeing devastated agriculture, overpopulation and unemployment, migrants from a dozen countries gather here in caravans every Monday night and make a mad dash through the Sahara to Libya, hoping to eventually hop across the Mediterranean to Europe.

This caravan's assembly is quite a scene to witness. Although it is evening, it's still 105 degrees, and there is little more than a crescent moon to illuminate the night. Then, all of a sudden, the desert comes alive.

Using the WhatsApp messaging service on their cellphones, the local smugglers, who are tied in with networks of traffickers extending across West Africa, start coordinating the surreptitious loading of migrants from safe houses and basements across the city. They've been gathering all week from Senegal, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Chad, Guinea, Cameroon, Mali and other towns in Niger.

With 15 to 20 men—no women—cramped together into the back of each Toyota pickup, their arms and legs spilling over the sides, the vehicles pop out of alleyways and follow scout cars that have zoomed ahead to make sure there are no pesky police officers or border guards lurking who have not been paid off.

It's like watching a symphony, but you have no idea where the conductor is. Eventually, they all converge at a gathering point north of the city, forming a giant caravan of 100 to 200 vehicles—the strength in numbers needed to ward off desert bandits.

Poor Niger. Agadez, with its warrens of ornate mud-walled buildings, is a remarkable Unesco World Heritage site, but the city has been abandoned by tourists after attacks nearby by Boko Haram and other jihadists. So, as one smuggler explains to me, the cars and buses of the tourist industry have now been repurposed into a migration industry. There are now wildcat recruiters, linked to smugglers, all across West Africa who appeal to the mothers of boys to put up the \$400 to \$500 to send them to seek out jobs in Libya or Europe. Few make it, but others keep coming.

I am standing at the Agadez highway control station watching this parade. As the Toyotas whisk by me, kicking up dust, they paint the desert road with stunning moonlit silhouettes of young men, silently standing in the back of each vehicle. The thought that their Promised Land is war-ravaged Libya tells you how desperate are the conditions they're leaving. Between 9,000 and 10,000 men make this journey every month.

A few agree to talk—nervously. One group of very young men from elsewhere in Niger tell me they're actually joining the rush to pan for gold in Djado in the far north of Niger. More typical are five young men who, in Senegalese-accented French, tell a familiar tale: no work in the village, went to the town, no work in the town, heading north.

What's crazy is that as you go north of here, closer to the Libya border, to Dirkou, you run into streams of migrants coming back from Libya, which they found ungoverned, abusive and lacking in any kind of decent work. One of them, Mati Almani, from Niger, tells me he had left his three wives and 17 children back in his village to search for work in Libya or Europe and returned deeply disillusioned. In Libya, say migrants, you can get beaten at any moment—or arbitrarily arrested and have the

police use your cellphone to call your family in Niger and demand a ransom for your release.

Just as Syria's revolution was set off in part by the worst four-year drought in the country's modern history—plus overpopulation, climate stresses and the Internet—the same is true of this African migration wave. That's why I'm here filming an episode for the "Years of Living Dangerously" series on climate change across the planet, which will appear on National Geographic Channel next fall. I'm traveling with Monique Barbut, who heads the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification, and Adamou Chaifou, Niger's minister of environment.

Chaifou explains that West Africa has experienced two decades of on-again-off-again drought. The dry periods prompt desperate people to deforest hillsides for wood for cooking or to sell, but they are now followed by increasingly violent rains, which then easily wash away the topsoil barren of trees. Meanwhile, the population explodes—mothers in Niger average seven children—as parents continue to have lots of kids for social security, and each year more fertile land gets eaten by desertification. "We now lose 100,000 hectares of arable land every year to desertification," says Chaifou. "And we lose between 60,000 and 80,000 hectares of forest every year."

As long as anyone could remember, he says, the rainy season "started in June and lasted until October. Now we get more big rains in April, and you need to plant right after it rains." But then it becomes dry again for a month or two, and then the rains come back, much more intense than before, and cause floods that wash away the crops, "and that is a consequence of climate change"—caused, he adds, primarily by emissions from the industrial North, not from Niger or its neighbors.

Says the U.N.'s Barbut, "Desertification acts as the trigger, and climate change acts as an amplifier of the political challenges we are witnessing today: economic migrants, interethnic conflicts and extremism." She shows me three maps of Africa with an oblong outline around a bunch of dots clustered in the middle of the continent. Map No. 1: the most vulnerable regions of desertification in Africa in 2008. Map No. 2: conflicts and food riots in Africa 2007-2008. Map No. 3: terrorist attacks in Africa in 2012.

All three outlines cover the same territory. The European Union recently struck a deal with Turkey to vastly increase E.U. aid to Ankara for dealing with refugees and migrants who have reached Turkey, in return for Turkey restricting their flow into Europe.

"If we would invest a fraction of that amount helping African nations combat deforestation, improve health and education and sustain small-scale farming, which is the livelihood of 80 percent of the people in Africa, so people here could stay on the land," says Barbut, "it would be so much better for them and for the planet."

Everyone wants to build walls these days, she notes, but the wall we need most is a "green wall" of reforestation that would hold back the desert and stretch from Mali in the west to Ethiopia in the east. "It's an idea that the Africans themselves have come up with," she adds. It makes enormous sense.

Because, in the end, no wall will hold back this surging migrant tide. Everything you see here screams that unless a way can be found to stabilize Africa's small-scale agriculture, one way or another they will try to get to Europe. Some who can't will surely gravitate toward any extremist group that pays them. Too many are now aware through mass media of the better life in Europe, and

too many see their governments as too frail to help them advance themselves.

I interviewed 20 men from at least 10 African countries at the International Organization for Migration aid center in Agadez—all had gone to Libya, tried and failed to get to Europe, and returned, but were penniless and unable to get back to their home villages. I asked them, "How many of you and your friends would leave Africa and go to Europe if you could get in legally?"

"Tout le monde," they practically shouted, while they all raised their hands.

I don't know much French, but I think that means "everybody."

## ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I want to applaud Senators MURKOWSKI and CANTWELL, the chair and ranking member of the Energy Committee, for their leadership and tenacity in passing yesterday's bipartisan Energy bill on the floor. This kind of bipartisanship has always been the political fuel that has driven some of our most important energy legislation. I thank them for their commitment to working together in a bipartisan fashion to pass this bill, and I look forward to working with them and all of my colleagues going forward to capture all of the potential for America's clean energy future.

There are many good provisions in this bill. The bill promotes energy efficiency in our buildings and appliances. It will help to modernize our electrical grid and support energy storage technologies. It permanently reauthorizes the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The bill includes a number of provisions and amendments that I authored that were accepted on the floor.

I was pleased that my bipartisan legislation with Senators INHOFE, ROUNDS, and BOOKER to reauthorize EPA's brownfields program through 2018 was included in the Energy bill. This legislation will help clean up the decades of abuse our lands have experienced at the hands of corporate polluters. It will help to create jobs and spur economic activity in Massachusetts and around the country, while revitalizing underutilized and polluted lands.

In December, Congress voted to lift the 40-year old restrictions on exporting U.S. oil overseas. During that debate, I and other Senators raised concerns regarding the impacts that exporting American oil abroad could have on U.S. consumers and refined fuel prices, independent refineries, and other sectors of the U.S. economy such as shipbuilding. However, the final legislation did not even include any requirement for analyzing and reporting on any potential impacts that exports could have on these industries or on U.S. consumers. Therefore, I offered an amendment, which the Senate adopted, that would require the Government Accountability Office, GAO to review and report back annually for 3 years on the impacts of crude oil exports on U.S. consumers, independent refineries, shipbuilders, and energy production.