

Professor Klaus Schwab
Founder & Executive Chairman
World Economic Forum
91-93 route de la Capite
CH-1223 Cologny/Geneva
Switzerland

Dear Prof. Schwab:

It is with great disappointment that I write to inform you I am unable to attend this year's World Economic Forum on Latin America, or the Young Global Leaders event in Santiago, Chile.

My absence this year comes as consequence of the five investigations and two political trials currently under way against me, and the ensuing judicial ruling that has prevented me from leaving Venezuela since 2004. In the past, the presiding court has granted me permission to travel on seven separate occasions. On April 17th the judge once again issued an authorization for my trip to Chile. Despite the authorization, on the day of my trip, I was stopped at the airport by State officials who informed me that the travel permit had been suddenly and inexplicably revoked.

This unprecedented event is yet another example of how the Venezuelan government flagrantly and systematically persecutes citizens who voice their dissent of our current administration. This discrimination occurs in the form of moral derision, ridicule and public scorn, threats to one's physical integrity, and, certainly, criminal prosecution.

In Venezuela today there is no respect for the fundamental principles of democracy. The different branches of government are neither autonomous nor independent. The rule of law is constantly unobserved - as evidenced by the Enabling Law passed recently, which unconstitutionally vests the Executive with an absolute power to legislate. Basic human rights are flouted - with more than fifteen thousand murder cases in 2006, most of them unresolved. Freedom of speech is severely curtailed - with the impending threat to close down RCTV television channel. Political discrimination is used as an instrument for instilling fear in dissenters - through State sponsored lists such as Lista Tascón and Lista Maisanta. Basic and indispensable conditions for free and fair elections are routinely disregarded

In addition, Venezuelan citizens have witnessed the progressive politization of our National Armed Forces, and simultaneous militarization of the different branches of government, as evidenced by an ever-increasing number of active and retired army personnel holding posts of public office.

In recent months, democrats around the world, but most importantly in Latin America, have begun to comprehend the extent to which Venezuelan democracy has been weakened, and the threat this represents to the entire region.

In the face of adversity, I remain optimistic in the belief that the deep democratic convictions of Venezuelans will come forth, as they have in the past, and will reflect our commitment to building a society based on justice, equality, security and liberty.

Please convey to all our Young Global Leaders colleagues, as well as to the World Economic Forum of Latin America attendees, my sincere regrets for my absence, as well as the following message: I will continue the

fight to build democracy, despite any efforts to hinder it. At this historic juncture, my generation faces an immense responsibility, and I remain as committed as ever to work towards a more just, prosperous, and freer world.

Respectfully,



Maria Corina Machado

Vice-President
SUMATE, A.C.