Remembering Tragedy and Human Solidarity

by Klaus Schwab* (published in The Huffington Post**)**

On 10 September 2001, my wife and I arrived in New York as I was to receive the Candlelight Award from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. We will never forget the warm atmosphere characterizing this special evening. We stayed close to Central Park.

On 11 September, I left the hotel for a meeting shortly before 9am. The taxi driver told me that " something " had happened in lower Manhattan. Listening to the radio, we suddenly heard the broadcaster cry out " Oh no! A plane has hit the second tower! "

At 9.30 my meeting stopped as the assistant of my discussion partner rushed in to announce that the World Trade Center had collapsed.

I immediately walked back to the hotel to learn more and to see my wife. Crossing Fifth Avenue and looking down the street, I could see and smell the enormous cloud of dust and smoke over lower Manhattan.

I will never forget the psychological tension and fear of not knowing what had really happened. The worst was to see the cloud of smoke and rubble and to know what terrible tragedy was unfolding behind that dust at the tip of Manhattan.

What impressed me most during the next days in the city was the great feeling of human solidarity in the face of such a horrible tragedy.

Immediately on our return to Switzerland I announced the move of our Annual Meeting 2002 from Davos to New York to show our own solidarity with the city and its people.

Our " Davos in New York " in January 2002 reminded all our participants of the strength and courage of New Yorkers. In the meantime, our second largest office has opened and a hundred World Economic Forum colleagues work in the heart of the city.

On this anniversary, New York's friends around the world remember the bravery and determination of its people and extend sympathy once again to all those who lost loved ones.

***Klaus Schwab**, Founder and Executive Chairman, World Economic Forum