

Young Global Leaders' Summit Ends With Commitment to Action

26 June 2005

Zermatt, Switzerland - Declaring "for the first time in the world we believe we can eradicate poverty in our generation", the Young Global Leaders urged governments to bring "social investment" - key interests of a number of the participants - into the mainstream, and agreed to set up a networking group within the Forum to work on poverty issues.

Another group of Young Global Leaders committed themselves to working to set up a free University for Africa, properly accredited and offering recognized qualifications, which could later expand to other regions. One of the Young Global Leaders has already created a successful venture of this kind in South Africa.

Some 120 of the first nominated group of 238 Young Global Leaders from 68 countries - all aged 40 or under - participated in the discussions in Zermatt. They included Shai Agassi, Member of the Executive Board, SAP, Germany; Matteo Arpe, Chief Executive Officer, Capitalia, Italy; Nesreen Mustafa Siddeek-Berwari, Minister of Municipalities and Public Works of Iraq; Amy Butte, Chief Financial Officer and Executive Vice-President, New York Stock Exchange, USA; US basketball star Dikembe Mutombo, Founder of Dikembe Mutombo Foundation, an organization to improve public healthcare in his native Democratic Republic of Congo; Rahul Gandhi, Congress Member of Parliament, India; and Jonathan Soros, Deputy Chairman, Soros Fund Management, USA.

In the Summit session outlining proposals for action, the environment group of Young Global Leaders called for "a creative leap" to make the world more sensitive to "the most urgent" problem facing the world: environmental risk. They agreed to hold three conferences a year and one face-to-face meeting annually in addition to the Young Global Leaders' Summit, and invited other participants in The Forum to join them in finding ways to promote environmental action.

On health, the Young Global Leaders said a new kind of partnership is needed to find solutions to care delivery. One member of the group challenged others to join him in creating what he called a new kind of business in health: the social-business sector, where the private sector would work on social goods.

Recognizing severe problems in global governance and security, the Young Global Leaders also agreed to develop a polling system to survey the opinions of The Forum members in advance of major international meetings and to publicize the views of this new generation. They urged the development of a concept of world citizenship.

In a keynote address, H.M. Queen Rania of Jordan told the Young Global Leaders last night they could be a dynamic engine for global progress crossing boundaries of culture. She urged them to build on their commitment to make tomorrow better for all, to extend their influence by mentoring and coaching other young people and by staying in touch with each other's endeavours.

"Working together, you can be a dynamic engine for global progress...a network that enables collaboration across boundaries of culture and concern," she said.

The Forum of Young Global Leaders is an initiative of Professor Klaus Schwab, Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum. It includes political leaders, business executives, scientists, economists, artists and journalists. Almost one-third are women and 84 come from outside Europe and North America. Young Global Leaders are nominated to serve for five years. The aim is to raise the number to 1,111 by 2009.

Queen Rania, chair of the nomination committee that selects the Young Global Leaders, noted that networks could make the crucial difference between success and minimal results in tackling social problems. "To give just one example - back in 2000, when I initially tackled the taboo topic of child abuse in Jordan, I was met with great resistance. People were ashamed to admit that such a problem even existed. Today, the issue of child abuse is not

only being spoken about openly, it is being written about in Jordanian newspapers and magazines. It is being talked about on Jordanian television and radio...and it is being widely advertised on billboards across the country. And this tide of awareness-raising, social empowerment and change is now spreading across the entire Arab world. ”

Queen Rania commented: “ This didn ’ t happen simply because I cared about the issue. It happened because I was one of the many people who decided to act. When we combined grassroots engagement with supportive public policy from government, sustained investment from the donor community, the private sector and international organizations, as well as education in the media, our impact was enhanced. Our mission became a movement. ”

Progress will be achieved by the Young Global Leaders not because of their titles, but by their actions in support of their dreams, she said. “ All of you are men and women who are not only dreamers but doers. Just as important, you are people who ’ ve always stood for something larger than yourselves – who conquer mountains, not to claim the summit, but to reveal the beauty on the other side. Let the bonds you ’ ve forged in Zermatt be the base camp of your climb. ”

David R. Gergen, Director, Center for Public Leadership, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, USA, said he was struck by the optimism that the participants brought to the problems. They are also “ perhaps the first generation of global leaders ” , he added.

The final day of the Inaugural four-day Summit tackled questions of leadership and developing a new mindset towards global problems. The results will feed into the Annual Meeting 2006 of the World Economic Forum, which brings together heads of global firms and world leaders from the governmental, intellectual and international communities.

The Forum of Young Global Leaders is an independent, non-profit foundation based in Geneva. Its website is www.younggloballeaders.org

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For more information, please contact:

Communications and Public Affairs
World Economic Forum
Tel.: +41 (0) 22 869 1212
Fax: +41 (0) 22 869 1394
E-mail: public.affairs@weforum.org

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World Economic Forum, 91-93 route de la Capite, CH-1223 Cologny/Geneva
Tel. +41 (0)22 869 1212, Fax +41 (0)22 786 2744, <http://www.weforum.org>