

# Trump blasts 'prophets of doom' in attack on climate activism

Comment came as Greta Thunberg demanded immediate action in Davos

[Davos 2020 – live updates](#)

[Analysis: Trump hails 1tn trees plan but ignores roots of problem](#)

[Larry Elliott and Graeme Wearden in Davos](#)

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[https://youtu.be/0UjFRZ3t\\_KM](https://youtu.be/0UjFRZ3t_KM)

"We must reject the prophet of doom" Trump decries climate 'prophets' in Davos keynote speech - video

Donald Trump told the world's business leaders to stop listening to "prophets of doom" as he used a keynote speech at the World Economic Forum to attack the teenage activist **Greta Thunberg** over her climate crisis warnings.

"To embrace the possibilities of tomorrow, we must reject the perennial prophets of doom and their predictions of the apocalypse, they are the heirs of yesterday's foolish fortune tellers."

The US president hailed America's growth record and compared campaigners against global heating with those who feared a population explosion in the 1960s and mass starvation in the 1970s.

On an opening day in Switzerland dominated by the climate emergency, Thunberg scoffed at Trump's claim that his backing for a new initiative to plant 1tn trees showed his concern for the environment.

"Our house is still on fire. Your inaction is fuelling the flames by the hour," Thunberg said. "And we're asking you to act as if you love your children more than anything else."

The US president and Thunberg did not meet face to face at the WEF, but Trump left few in doubt about who he was referring to as he defended his record since entering the White House three years ago.

"This is not a time for pessimism," he said. "This is a time for optimism. To embrace the possibilities of tomorrow, we must reject the perennial prophets of doom and their predictions of the apocalypse. They are the heirs of yesterday's foolish fortune tellers."

"They want to see us do badly, but we don't let that happen. They predicted an overpopulation crisis in the 1960s, mass starvation in the 70s, and an end of oil in the 1990s. These alarmists always demand the same thing: absolute power to dominate, transform and control every aspect of our lives. We will never let radical socialists destroy our economy, wreck our country or eradicate our liberty."



Davos: 'Forget about net zero, we need real zero' - Greta Thunberg

<https://youtu.be/6D9iWNL2ahg>

"What will you tell your children?": Greta Thunberg blasts climate inaction at Davos – video

"All the solutions are obviously not available within today's societies, nor do we have the time to wait for new technological solutions to become available to start drastically reducing our emissions"

He said he was "a big believer in the environment" in a speech that ensured he was absent from Washington as impeachment hearings took place on Capitol Hill. "The environment to me is very important," he said.

He made no mention of the climate emergency but backed the plan – launched in **Davos** – to capture carbon by planting trees on a mass scale in the coming years. "What I want is the cleanest water and the cleanest air," he said.

Environmentalists were unimpressed by a speech in which Trump boasted that this support for the coal and oil industries meant the US was self-sufficient in energy.

Thunberg said: "Planting trees is good, of course, but it's nowhere near enough, and it cannot replace real mitigation and re-wilding nature. We don't need to lower emissions. Emissions need to stop."

Thunberg had three demands for her Davos audience:

The halt of all investment in fossil fuel investment and extraction by companies, banks, institutions and governments.

An immediate end to all fossil fuel subsidies.

An immediate exit from fossil fuel investments.

"We don't want it done in 2050, 2030, or even 2021, we want it done now," Thunberg said. "You might think we're naive, but if you won't do it, you must explain to your children why you've given up on the Paris agreement goals, and knowingly created a climate crisis," she said.

She then added that the right, the left, and the centre of politics had all failed the sustainability test. "No political ideology or economic structure has managed to tackle the climate and environmental emergency and create a cohesive and sustainable world."

Jennifer Morgan, Greenpeace's executive director, said: "The 1tn trees initiative didn't make up for the lack of a wider attack on the climate emergency, and Trump had failed to appreciate the scale of the crisis."

"To assume you can have a great, profitable America, and happy Americans without understanding the risk to Americans from climate change is astounding. It just demonstrates the level of denial, and the capture of this government by the coal, oil and gas industries."

Trump said the American dream was back, "bigger, better and stronger" than before, adding that the benefits of growth were going primarily to low-income workers rather than the better off. Trump added that 7m jobs had been created and 12,000 factories opened during his presidency.

Many of the president's claims were rejected by the Columbia University economics professor **Joseph Stiglitz**. "Research shows that Trump normally tells five or six lies a day. He far exceeded that today," he said, noting that growth had been faster under Barack Obama than it was currently under Trump, and that life expectancy had fallen every year of his presidency.

Although the **US economy** grew far more rapidly in previous decades than it has since he was elected in November 2016, Trump said: "I'm proud to say that the US is in an economic boom, the likes of which the world has never seen before."

The main hall in Davos, together with an overspill room, were packed to hear the president, although there were some titters as he ran through a litany of boasts.

"I hold up the American model as an example to the world," Trump said, contrasting his record with that of his predecessor, Obama.

The US was "thriving, flourishing and winning" unprecedentedly, he added, citing **trade deals signed last week with China** and Mexico-Canada as models for the 21st century.

"I am looking forward to a tremendous **new trade deal with the UK**," Trump said, noting that Britain had a "wonderful new prime minister" in Boris Johnson, who was keen on a deal.

The president said the economic boom had happened despite the US Federal Reserve, which "raised rates too fast and cut them too slowly".

## Davos: Trump decries climate 'prophets of doom' with Thunberg in audience

2 hours ago BBC

**US President Donald Trump has decried climate "prophets of doom" in a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where sustainability is the main theme.**

He called for a rejection of "predictions of the apocalypse" and said America would defend its economy.

Mr Trump did not directly name the teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg, who was in the audience.

Later, she excoriated political leaders, saying the world "in case you hadn't noticed, is currently on fire".

Environmental destruction is at the top of the agenda at the annual summit of the world's decision-makers, which takes place at a Swiss ski resort.

### What else did the president say?

In his keynote speech, Mr Trump said that it was a time for optimism, not pessimism, in a speech that touted his administration's economic achievements and America's energy boom.

Speaking of climate activists, he said: "These alarmists always demand the same thing - absolute power to dominate, transform and control every aspect of our lives."

They were, he said, "the heirs of yesterday's foolish fortune tellers".

Mr Trump also announced that **the US would join an initiative to plant, restore and conserve a trillion trees.**

"We're committed to conserving the majesty of God's creation and the natural beauty of our world," he said.

The president was speaking hours before his impeachment trial began in the US Senate.

### What has Greta Thunberg been saying?

Soon after Mr Trump spoke, Ms Thunberg, the 17-year-old Swedish climate activist who has led a global movement of school strikes calling for urgent environmental action, opened a session on "Averting a Climate Apocalypse".

She refrained from naming Mr Trump but issued this warning to the world's leaders.

"I wonder, what will you tell your children was the reason to fail and leave them facing... climate chaos that you knowingly brought upon them? That it seemed so bad for the economy that we decided to resign the idea of securing future living conditions without even trying?"

"Our house is still on fire. Your inaction is fuelling the flames by the hour, and we are telling you to act as if you loved your children above all else."

She strongly criticised politicians and business leaders for what she said were continuous "empty words and promises".

"You say: 'We won't let you down. Don't be so pessimistic.' And then, silence."



When Greta Thunberg met Sir David Attenborough for the first time (via Skype)  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/embed/p07yxyt/51189430>

### Intriguing message

The timing of President Trump's "don't panic" message is intriguing.

He's reassuring the Davos rich club about the climate just as the pillars of capitalism are themselves starting to treat global warming as a crisis.

The leading bank Goldman Sachs will no longer fund new investments in Arctic oil or in coal for power stations.  
And the boss of investment giant BlackRock has defined climate change as the biggest threat to markets as rising temperatures put profits at risk.  
His company manages more than \$6.5 trillion (£5tn) of savers' cash.  
Meanwhile the outgoing governor of the Bank of England warns that firms which don't change will go to the wall.  
President Trump - astride an American economy fuelled by cheap gas - thinks they are wrong.  
And he's not alone. Leaders in Australia, Brazil, Russia and Saudi Arabia also cling to economies driven by fossil fuels.  
It's politics vs science: the battle of our age.  
Follow Roger on twitter @rharrabin

### What other reaction has there been?

Economist Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Laureate, criticised Mr Trump's speech. According to Reuters news agency he said it was "astounding" and made "as if what we are seeing with our eyes are not there".  
The joint leader of Germany's Green Party, Robert Habeck, was scathing. "Only self-praise, ignorance, disregard for everyone, no perception of global problems. It was the worst speech I've ever heard in my life."

### What are the climate targets?

The world's nations committed in the 2015 Paris Agreement to keep temperatures well inside 2.0C (3.6F) above pre-industrial times.  
They agreed to try to keep the rise to 1.5C but scientists say they are well off that target.

Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said the Earth was heading instead for 3C and that "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" would be needed to keep to the preferred target of 1.5C.

The renowned naturalist and broadcaster David Attenborough recently told the BBC that "the moment of crisis has come" in efforts to tackle climate change, referencing the bushfires that have ravaged parts of south-eastern Australia.

**The US is withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement**, which Mr Trump has called a "bad deal." The pull-out will take effect the day after the 2020 US presidential election - assuming that Mr Trump is re-elected.

JANUARY 18, 2020 / 4:38 AM / UPDATED 9 HOURS AGO

## 'You have not seen anything yet,' climate activist Greta says ahead of Davos

Marina Depetris, Cecile Mantovani  
3 MIN READ



LAUSANNE, Switzerland (Reuters) - Swedish activist Greta Thunberg marched with 10,000 protesters in the Swiss city of Lausanne on Friday and said "you have not seen anything yet" before some head to Davos next week to challenge the global financial elite to fight climate change.

The 17-year-old, who launched the #FridaysforFuture movement that has sparked worldwide protests, denounced a lack of government action to cut heat-trapping emissions before it is too late.

"So, we are now in a new year and we have entered a new decade and so far, during this decade, we have seen no sign whatsoever that real climate action is coming and that has to change," Thunberg said in a speech in Lausanne.



“To the world leaders and those in power, I would like to say that you have not seen anything yet. You have not seen the last of us, we can assure you that. And that is the message that we will bring to the World Economic Forum in Davos next week.”

Protesters held signs including “Wake up and Smell the Bushfires” and “It is late but it is not too late”.

Hundreds will take trains over the weekend and then march to Klosters near Davos, the annual gathering of world political and business leaders that Thunberg is attending for the second year in a row and will take part in two panel events.

Climate change and environmental destruction top the risks highlighted by global decision-makers in a survey ahead of the 2020 gathering of the global elite.

This year’s meeting of 3,000 includes U.S. President Donald Trump who once described climate change as a “hoax” and whose administration in November filed paperwork to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, the first formal step in a one-year process to exit the pact to fight climate change.



The latest World Economic Forum annual meeting takes place against the backdrop of some of Australia’s worst ever bushfires. While the government there has avoided making a link to climate change, the fires have deepened public concern about the heating of the planet.

Last year was the Earth’s second-hottest since records began, and the world should brace itself for more extreme weather events like Australia’s fires, the U.N. World Meteorological Organization said on Wednesday.

“We are...an alliance that is organizing next week in 20 countries to say ‘time is up’ to the World Economic Forum

in Davos. Time is up,” a Kenyan activist, Njoki Njoroge Njehu, told the crowd in Lausanne.

“It is time to abolish billionaires. It is time to abolish billionaires, because we cannot afford them, the planet cannot afford billionaires,” she said.

## ***Climate Change Takes Center Stage in Davos***

With businesses under pressure to act, solutions are emerging, but not fast enough, some participants fear.



Climate change was at the top of the list of priorities at the World Economic Forum even before the bushfires broke out in Australia.  
Credit...  
Matthew Abbott for The New York Times

By Stanley Reed  
Jan. 20, 2020  
Updated 9:37 a.m. ET

Even before catastrophic fires broke out in Australia in late fall, climate change was at the top of the list of priorities at the 50th anniversary of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, this week.

But those fires — preceded by others in California — along with rising sea levels, flooding and supercharged storms, are putting more pressure on the politicians, business executives, financiers, thought leaders and others who attend to show they are part of the solution to one of the world’s most pressing challenges.

In a nod to a younger generation most at risk and demanding action on climate change, Greta Thunberg, the Swedish teenager who has become a prominent environmental activist, is scheduled to appear. In a column this month in [The Guardian](#) that she wrote with other environmental activists, they demanded an end to investments in fossil fuels.

“Anything less than immediately ceasing these investments in the fossil fuel industry would be a betrayal of life itself,” they said. “Today’s business as usual is turning into a crime against humanity. We demand that leaders play their part in putting an end to this madness.”

Daniel Yergin, the oil historian and a regular attendee at the Davos forum, agreed that “climate is going to loom larger than ever before.” And Ian Bremmer, founder and president of the political risk firm [Eurasia Group](#), said: “These issues are becoming more real, more salient every day, whether you are talking about Venice or California or Australia or Jakarta. These are real events with enormous direct human and economic costs.”

## **‘How can he face himself?’: Architect of Paris Agreement slams Trump’s approach to climate crisis**

PUBLISHED MON, JAN 20 2020 1:28 PM EST  
Sam Meredith  
[@SMEREDITH19](#)

### **KEY POINTS**

“How can he face his children and his grandchildren? How can he face citizens of the United States and of the world? I don’t understand how he

can do that," Christiana Figueres, former United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) said Monday.

Her comments come as policymakers and business leaders arrive in east Switzerland for the WEF's four-day annual conference.



Christiana Figueres, Founding Partner, Global Optimism, on Centre Stage during day two of Web Summit 2019 at the Altice Arena in Lisbon, Portugal.  
Vaughn Ridley | Sportsfile for Web Summit via Getty Images

DAVOS, Switzerland — The architect of the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement told CNBC on Monday that it cannot be easy for President [Donald Trump](#) to justify his approach to the climate crisis — both to himself and citizens of the world.

Speaking on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum ([WEF](#)) in the Swiss Alpine town of Davos, Christiana Figueres, former [United Nations](#) Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) said Monday: "I always wonder: How can he face himself?"

"How can he face his children and his grandchildren? How can he face citizens of the United States and of the world? I don't understand how he can do that."

Figueres' comments come as policymakers and business leaders arrive in Switzerland for the WEF's four-day annual conference, with those in attendance scheduled to focus on the intensifying climate crisis.

The event, which is often criticized for being out of touch with the real world, has said it aims to assist governments and international institutions in tracking progress toward the Paris Agreement and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

It follows the hottest year on record for the world's oceans, the second-hottest year for global average temperatures and wildfires from the U.S. to the Amazon to Australia.

**If we do the right thing this decade, we can continue to design the future but if we don't, we are really condemned to a world of increasing destruction, conflict and pain.**

[Christiana Figueres](#)  
FOUNDING PARTNER OF GLOBAL OPTIMISM

Trump is set to travel to the picturesque ski resort after skipping the conference last year due to the partial government shutdown. The U.S. president, who is likely to be one of the star attractions of the event, has often expressed skepticism about the scale of the climate crisis.

Since coming to power in 2016, Trump has pulled the U.S. — one of the world's leading carbon emitters — out of the Paris accord and sought to roll back over 80 environmental regulations.

A spokesperson at the White House declined to comment when contacted by CNBC on Monday.

### **A 'golden' decade in the history of humankind**

"For this decade and this decade only, humans have the power to determine our future," Figueres said, before adding policymakers and world leaders must recognize how important it is to make the most of a "short-lived opportunity" to address the climate emergency.

"If we do the right thing this decade, we can continue to design the future but if we don't, we are really condemned to a world of increasing destruction, conflict and pain."

“So, it is a golden 10 years in the history of the evolution of humankind — we have to wake up to that. We are holding the pen, so we better write properly,” Figueres said.

The WEF’s latest Global Risks report, [published last week](#), found that the top five global risks in terms of likelihood were all environmental.

In terms of the severity of impact over the next 10 years, the top risk was deemed to be the failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

“This year is the beginning of the most consequential decade in human history,” Tom Rivett-Carnac, a founding partner of Global Optimism, alongside Figueres, told CNBC on Monday.

“We are facing one of two very different scenarios. Either, a world that increasingly devolves into being more and more difficult to meet human needs and increasingly painful losses of biodiversity. Or, a world where we actually make the transition, we can regenerate the world, we can regrow the forests and we can have livable, enjoyable cities.”

When asked what his message would be to the more than 3,000 participants attending this year’s forum, Rivett-Carnac replied: “This is an emergency and we need to start acting like it.”

## WEF’s top 5 global risks for 2020 are all about the environment

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Holly Ellyatt  
@HOLLYELLYATT

### KEY POINTS

Economic and political polarization will rise in 2020, according to the World Economic Forum’s latest Global Risks report, but severe threats to the climate account for all of the top five long-term risks.

The report published Wednesday, just days before the annual WEF event kicks off in Davos, Switzerland, forecasted a year of increased domestic and international divisions as well as economic slowdown.



Burnt trees are seen in Mallacoota on January 15, 2020, Australia. The Princes Highway between Mallacoota and Orbost remains closed to public due to the risk of falling trees following the devastating bushfires that have swept through East Gippsland in recent weeks.

Luis Ascui

Economic and political polarization will rise in 2020, according to the World Economic Forum’s latest Global Risks report, but severe threats to the climate account for all of the top five long-term risks.

The report published Wednesday, just days before the annual WEF event kicks off in Davos, Switzerland, forecasted a year of increased domestic and international divisions as well as economic slowdown.

Respondents were asked to assess both the likelihood of a global risk occurring over the course of the next 10 years, and the severity of its impact at a global level if it were to occur.

For the first time in the survey’s 10-year outlook, the top five global risks in terms of likelihood were all environmental, with extreme weather events, human-made environmental damage and disasters and major biodiversity loss and natural disasters from earthquakes to tsunamis all the likeliest risks in 2020. In terms of the severity of impact over the next 10 years, the top risk was

deemed to be the failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

“Geopolitical turbulence is propelling us towards an ‘unsettled’ unilateral world of great power rivalries at a time when business and government leaders must focus urgently on working together to tackle shared risks,” the report stated.

WEF said that collaboration between world leaders, businesses and policy-makers was needed to stop severe threats to the climate, environment, public health and technology systems.

“The political landscape is polarized, sea levels are rising and climate fires are burning. This is the year when world leaders must work with all sectors of society to repair and reinvigorate our systems of cooperation, not just for short-term benefit but for tackling our deep-rooted risks,” Borge Brende, president of the World Economic Forum, said.

## Climate risks

Over 750 global experts and decision-makers were asked to rank their biggest concerns in terms of likelihood and impact and 78% said they expect “economic confrontations” and “domestic political polarization” to rise in 2020: “This would prove catastrophic, particularly for addressing urgent challenges like the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and record species decline,” the report, produced in partnership with Marsh & McLennan and Zurich Insurance Group, stated.

“This points to a need for policy-makers to match targets for protecting the Earth with ones for boosting economies — and for companies to avoid the risks of potentially disastrous future losses by adjusting to science-based targets.”

The report’s publication comes as minds are concentrated on climate change with record temperatures and drought fuelling Australian wildfires that continue to ravage the natural habitat of parts of the country, causing 28 deaths so far, the loss of thousands of homes and biodiversity loss.

John Drzik, chairman of Marsh & McLennan Insights, told CNBC that the report’s findings were striking. “Environmental risks have been growing as a concern in the report over that ten-year period, but this was very striking to see the top five all in the climate sphere,” he told CNBC’s Joumana Bercetche.

“A new area that’s really been rising in the risks report is around biodiversity loss and the concerns both of its direct impact as well as its intersection with climate.” He noted that it was getting harder for countries to tackle issues like climate change together as the geopolitical environment becomes more fractured.

“The natural institutions to try to resolve things on a multilateral basis have been weakening, and so it’s harder to tackle an issue like climate in a multilateral, multi-stakeholder approach.” This year marks [the 50th anniversary of the World Economic Forum in the Swiss Alps](#), with the theme this year being “Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World.”

## Stakeholders

Among the high-profile guests are President Donald Trump and the 17-year old climate activist Greta Thunberg. Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission; Sanna Marin, prime minister of Finland (and the world’s youngest serving prime minister) and Jair Bolsonaro, the president of Brazil are also attending.

WEF noted that respondents to its global risks report who were born after 1980 ranked environmental risks higher than other respondents, in the short and long-term.

Almost 90% of these respondents believe “extreme heat waves”, “destruction of ecosystems” and “health impacted by pollution” will be aggravated in 2020. They also believe that the impact from environmental risks by 2030 will be more catastrophic and more likely.

## Greenpeace hits out at Davos banks for \$1.4tn climate hypocrisy

Report highlights financial support given to hydrocarbon sector by 24 institutions

**Graeme Wearden in Davos and Kalyeena Makortoff**

Mon 20 Jan 2020 23:01 GMT



Climate protesters at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, which coincides with the release of the Greenpeace report: It's the Finance Sector, Stupid. Photograph: Walter Bier/EPA

The world's leading financial institutions have been accused of hypocrisy over the climate emergency, after providing significant support for the fossil fuel industry over the last five years.

A report by Greenpeace, the environmental group, highlights that 24 banks which regularly attend the **World Economic Forum in Davos** have provided \$1.4tn (£1.1tn) of financial support for the hydrocarbon sector since the **Paris agreement set new emissions reduction goals in 2015**.

The financial cooperation with fossil fuel firms includes loans, debt underwriting, equity issuances and direct investment. The report, called *It's the Finance Sector, Stupid*, also shows how some major insurers and pension funds that flock to **Davos** each year are key supporters of polluting industries such as coal.

The data was compiled from BankTrack, an organisation that monitors the financial sector. It shows that JP Morgan, the Wall Street investment bank, has provided \$195bn of financial support to fossil fuel companies since 2015. JP Morgan declined to comment on the report.

Jennifer Morgan, Greenpeace International's executive director, said the WEF's mission statement is to "improve the state of the world" but the banks cited in the campaign group's report are falling short of this goal.

"The banks, insurers and pension funds here at Davos are culpable for the climate emergency. Despite environmental and economic warnings, they're fuelling another global financial crisis by propping up the fossil fuel industry," said Morgan. "These money men at Davos are nothing short of hypocrites as they say they want to save the planet but are actually killing it for short-term profit."

Ten top banks provided around \$1tn of the financial aid for fossil fuel firms, the report said. They are JP Morgan Chase, Citi, Bank of America, RBC Royal Bank, Barclays, MUFG, TD Bank, Scotiabank, Mizuho and Morgan Stanley.

A Barclays spokesperson said: "We recognise that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today, and are determined to do all we can to support the transition to a low-carbon economy, while also ensuring that global energy needs continue to be met. In 2018 we facilitated £27.3bn in social and environmental financing across our business including green bonds and renewable financing."

Greenpeace is also concerned that three major pension funds — the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and PensionDanmark — hold investments worth at least \$26bn in major fossil fuel companies.

Some financial companies have made encouraging noises about addressing the climate emergency, after seeing rising public concern and an **escalation in extreme weather events**. They cite initiatives such as green bonds, and a UN-backed "principles of responsible banking" initiative.

Last week, asset manager BlackRock **announced it would put sustainability at the heart of its active investment model**. The announcement represented a major shift for the world's biggest fund manager, although BlackRock's huge "passive" investment arm will continue to invest in fossil fuel firms through tracked funds, for example.

Vincent Manier of ENGIE Impact, which advises companies on sustainability goals, said he believed investors will be forced to take the issue more seriously.

"What we can take away from BlackRock's move is that investors that don't integrate climate risk assessments into their overall portfolio management processes are not capturing the full risk profile of their investments. The onus is on companies to demonstrate that they have a holistic understanding of all risks facing their business, disclose them and are developing plans to mitigate those risks," Manier said.

The climate emergency is a major issue at Davos this year. Klaus Schwab, WEF's founder, has written to attendees asking them to make their companies carbon neutral by 2050 at the latest.

Climate activists are demanding faster progress. Greta Thunberg, who speaks at Davos on Tuesday, is pushing global leaders to end the "madness" of huge ongoing investments in fossil fuel exploration and enormous subsidies for coal, oil and gas use.

## Trump snubs Davos vision in another America-first speech

Analysis by Charles Riley, [CNN Business](#)

Updated 1624 GMT (0024 HKT) January 21, 2020

**Davos, Switzerland (CNN Business)** President Donald Trump's speech in Davos was not what many attendees wanted to hear.

At a conference dedicated to multilateralism and earnest discussion of the world's most pressing problems, the American president used his keynote address to reel off a laundry list of his domestic accomplishments, promote the US economy and dismiss climate activists as "prophets of doom."

He didn't take questions from his host, World Economic Forum founder Klaus Schwab, or the elite audience of leading executives, bankers and politicians.

This year's Davos meeting is focusing heavily on how business and the economy must change to save the planet. But taking the stage just hours after Greta Thunberg admonished world leaders for doing "basically nothing" to reduce carbon emissions, Trump touted America's role as the world's biggest oil and gas producer and dismissed climate activists as prophets of doom.

The US economy was instead the focus of Trump's speech. The president touted his record on jobs, wages, growth and the stock market.

What was missing was even a perfunctory nod to the interests or priorities of other countries. Instead, Trump touted American exceptionalism and his preference for unilateral action in what many in the crowd may have mistaken for a campaign speech.

Robin Niblett, the director of London think tank Chatham House, said he wasn't surprised by the president's defiant attitude. "I don't

think anyone would ever expect Donald Trump to take a step toward you," he said. "He expects the world to take a step toward him on everything."

Trump has long denied the science of climate change and one of his first acts as president was to announce the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris accord aimed at limiting the rise in global temperatures.

Nevertheless, Niblett said he was taken aback by Trump's aggressive rebuke of climate activists. In the most pointed remarks of his speech, Trump said the world should ignore environmentalists, arguing that alarmist warnings of global destruction from decades past never materialized.

"To embrace the possibilities of tomorrow, we must reject the perennial prophets of doom and their predictions of the apocalypse," said Trump. "They are the heirs of yesterday's foolish fortune tellers."

The president instead urged attendees to embrace the potential for technology and innovation to solve many of the world's problems, saying that breakthroughs that result from the dynamism of market economies are able to solve any problem.

The message represents a sharp departure from the official playbook at the World Economic Forum, where this year's theme is "Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World."

Every company represented at Davos is being asked to commit to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and many have come to the conference armed with talking points on what they're doing to combat the climate crisis. Some, like Microsoft (MSFT), have gone much further.

Thunberg quickly shot back at Trump, whom she has criticized for abandoning the Paris agreement.

"All the solutions are obviously not available within today's societies, nor do we have the time to wait for new technological solutions to become available to start drastically reducing our emissions," said the teenage activist.

Khalid Abdulla-Janahi, chairman of Vision 3, said he found the panel discussion featuring Thunberg to be refreshing, and a blueprint for how the World Economic Forum could move forward. Then came Trump.

"A lot of us are investing in renewables," said the Davos veteran. "It's not an easy thing to make money on, but it's the only way we're going to sustain our future. To get nothing from the president on that aspect, that was a problem for me."

Trump did, however, attract another huge crowd during his second trip to Davos, with attendees and the media packing into the venue's biggest conference hall to hear his address. For now, Davos and Trump may have to learn to co-exist.

"The idea that Trump is somehow anti-Davos is ludicrous," Ian Bremmer, the president of risk consultancy Eurasia Group, said on Twitter. "He loves the event. Loves the attention. Loves the concentration of wealth and power."