

The World Economic Forum

Many of the world's political and business leaders met at the end of January in Davos, Switzerland, for the World Economic Forum (WEF). What happens at this conference?

1 Group the following people who have attended the WEF into: *Politicians, Business leaders and Celebrities.*

Richard Gere	Lula da Silva	Sharon Stone	Bill Gates
John Howard	Jacques Chirac	Michael Dell	Gerhard Schroeder
George Soros	Angeline Jolie	Bono	Bill Clinton

2 Scan this interview by a journalist from a business news website with one of the conference participants, a CEO. Underline the names of any famous people from exercise 1.

So – tell me something about the World Economic Forum, Jonathan.

Well – it's held every year in Davos, a ski-resort in Switzerland. It lasts five days. It attracts about 100,000 people – business and world leaders ... and celebrities!

Why do people go?

Lots of reasons really. To network. To make deals. Even ... well, to relax – get away from the pressures of being a CEO and try and see things from a different perspective.

And just who goes? I think Davos attracts some big names, right?

Absolutely. Clinton's been a regular supporter. This year, Richard Gere and Angeline Jolie were on the guest list. Of course, Bill Gates came to tell us all about his philanthropic enterprises. And Bono sees it a great chance to raise awareness of issues surrounding poverty in Africa.

Why do you come?

Well, I run a non-profit making company, trying to think of ways technology can help developing nations. So I really come for the ideas – and to make contacts.

Some people say some of the workshops are a bit – well, 'whacky'.

Maybe – maybe some are a bit 'off the wall', like the one on happiness. But you know, it's also good to think about the concept of what makes us happy. After all, people in the rich nations are not exactly happy!

The conference has been criticised for being – well, just a bit too 'jolly'. Isn't it a bit like a 5-day party?

For some, maybe, but there's been some great debates – on China, fighting AIDS, stem-cell research. This year's theme is about corporate responsibility.

Ok. And how did it all end this year?

Well, the founder, Klaus Schwab wrapped it up with a call for businesses to take on more responsibility for critical challenges facing the world – like global warming.

Jonathan, thanks.

My pleasure.

3 Read the interview again. Do you think that the WEF is a worthwhile event?

4 Create sentences about your own company with some of the following words and expressions from the interview.

to network to make a deal pressure(s) critical challenges (non) profit-making to make contacts

5 Read the following Memo and prepare your ideas in small groups. Hold a class meeting and present your ideas.

To: All staff **From:** CEO
Re: Post-WEF initiative
Date: February 2005

In 2005, we will set aside \$1 million to help reduce some of the problems facing the world. Have your department brainstorm ideas on how we can use the money. Note: previous initiatives have included: *environmental projects (global warming), medical projects, developing nations, helping the digital divide etc.* Please be ready to present your proposals at tomorrow's meeting. I believe business has a role in solving global problems! Thanks.