

# Donald who? Davos shrugs off President Trump's visit

By Katie Hope and Joe Miller BBC News, Davos

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**Donald Trump's visit to the World Economic Forum in Davos was billed as a showdown between the sophisticated "global elites" who attend in droves, and the baseball-cap wearing president's brash "America First" rhetoric.**

Yet mention his name in the bustling foyer of the Congress Centre, and the reaction is surprisingly benign. Many attendees shrug indifferently, rather than launch into an angry rant.

Gabrielle Bacon, who lives in the US, says she gets to listen to President Trump a lot at home, and is not remotely excited about his Davos appearance. Her main interest is in the European leaders who have spoken here, such as French President Emmanuel Macron and Italy's Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni. She predicts, however, that his speech may not go down well, saying that President Trump is sometimes misunderstood in Europe. "He doesn't talk in the same way as the European leaders and I think that's very confusing to people," she explains.

Keen to clarify that she's not defending Donald Trump, Mrs Bacon says that his much-touted "America First" message is seen by some in the US as wanting the best for citizens there, but it doesn't mean that he doesn't want good things for other countries too. Nonetheless, she's glad he's come: "Every leader should have their shot up there".

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Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, co-ordinator for the Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad, thinks the president's visit is drawing attention away from more respected attendees. "Personally, I'm not a fan, I am not going to be here to listen to what he is going to say," she says. "What Justin [Trudeau] and Macron and the president of WEF said, those are the words of politicians who resonated in my head, and who are calling on people to collaborate, to come together, to respect women's rights, to change the economy, to respect the environment - what is [Trump] going to say that is better than what they said?" Ms Ibrahim, who first came to Davos a year ago, says Donald Trump's profanity-laden comments about immigrants from countries like hers have not been forgotten. "I am still shocked by what he

said last week about African and Caribbean countries," she says. "I don't want to waste my time or energy thinking about [Trump]"

### **'It will not help in our relations with the Palestinians'**

Some delegates are reluctant to put their views of Trump's visit on record, and privately have reservations about whether his arrival, along with the biggest ever US government delegation in WEF's 48-year history, will achieve much beyond generating headlines. "I think it's very good that he's coming, because he has to be exposed to what is going on in the world," says one Israeli financier. Not that the exposure will mean much, he adds. "He's driven by something else," the man, on his fourth trip to WEF, says. "He's coming to calm down the world, but then somebody will [annoy] him the day after tomorrow, and he will tweet it all around the world, and that's it."

Donald Trump has extended a hand to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom he met at Davos, by promising to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, recognising the latter as Israel's capital. But the Israeli delegate we spoke to thinks this move is counter-productive, especially for those representing his country on the "Magic Mountain". "It will not help in our relations with the Palestinians, and we are coming here to build it up, we want to talk, we want to get a solution."

### **'We will welcome him'** *Donald Trump or Kim Jong-un*

Chinese delegate Layla Dong, is adamant that inviting Donald Trump to Davos was the right thing to do. "It's an open platform, we will welcome him because he's the president of the United States," she explains. "The Forum is all about being a platform for people to communicate, so we are open to everybody, and if one day, the leader of North Korea wants to come to the Forum, they should also be welcomed". Yet Ms Dong, who has been coming to Davos for three years, is sceptical about whether Mr Trump will say much worthy of note.

On her phone, she points to a response to Trump's tweet on Thursday, announcing that he was heading to Davos to "tell the world how great America is and is doing." The riposte reads: "It's only a few days after your first government shutdown, and you're going to Switzerland to lecture other countries on how they run their governments. You're funny."

"I agree with this guy," she says.

### **'We're all equal here'**

Andrea Bandelli is chief executive of Science Gallery International, a group which works to engage young people with science. He isn't planning to listen to President Trump due to other meetings that clash with the speech. But he's still glad that Mr Trump decided to come, saying the whole point of the World Economic Forum is that everybody should be invited. For all attendees here, he says, how much they get out of it depends on how well they listen and how much empathy they have. His hope is that President Trump's visit will be "a constructive one rather than a destructive one".

Mr Bandelli notes that the point of the Forum is to bring everyone together, and that "no one comes here with a reason that is higher than anybody else's".

"We're all equal here and that's how we are treated," he says. But might President Trump, who is not known for his humility, find that rather difficult? "There is always a chance that everybody is changed for the better after attending the annual meeting," he quips.