

A Luminous Presence in Davos

World Child Forum sets a poetic sign for dialogue during the World Economic Forum

Davos, 21 January 2026 – It was with a quiet, poetic intervention in public space, that the World Child Forum set a visible sign for intergenerational dialogue on Wednesday evening during the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. Away from security zones and conference rooms, time stood still at Bubenbrunnenplatz – right in the midst of the tightly scheduled pace of the WEF.

Black limousines push their way through the main street of Davos. Heavy vehicles, security personnel, barriers. The familiar image of the World Economic Forum: focused, shielded, goal-oriented. People in dark coats hurry from one appointment to the next, negotiating the future of the world within dense programs.

And then there is a halt. Suddenly, a luminous figure stands in the flow, appears amidst the turbulence of the WEF. Taller than the people surrounding it. Silent. Without words. It makes no demands, makes no sound. It glows. And that alone is enough. People stop. First briefly, then longer. Conversations stopped, gazes lift, something in the atmosphere shifts.

On Wednesday evening, the World Child Forum was present here – not in the congress center and not behind security zones, but where public space is still possible. Two illuminated figures appeared: one small, one large. The smaller one emerged first, alone, searching. Then the larger one awakened. With it came a moment that is difficult to explain. Adults fell silent. Some looked upward, others smiled involuntarily. For a brief instant, something seemed to open up that rarely finds space in the everyday rhythm of the WEF: a sense of wonder.

White cards displayed questions. No slogans, no demands. Questions from children, from young people, and from those who were in Davos because of the World Economic Forum. Questions that are allowed to remain open. Questions that do not need to be answered immediately. Perhaps that is precisely why they resonated so strongly.

The World Child Forum does not see itself as a counter-event to the World Economic Forum, but as a complement – a quiet parallel space. At the very place where the future is discussed, it makes visible who will carry this future the longest. Not through theses, but through presence. Not through volume, but through poetry.

“We did not want to create an opposing pole, but a space of resonance,” says Bernhard Hanel of the World Child Forum. “A place where dialogue is not negotiated, but experienced.”

Under the WEF annual theme 2026, “*A Spirit of Dialogue*,” the World Child Forum takes dialogue at its word. Forward-looking thinking begins where people are willing to listen, to allow questions, and to endure uncertainty. Where processes matter more than quick answers. Where generations meet – eye to eye.

Accompanied by alphorns, an image emerged at Bubenbrunnenplatz that lingers: black limousines, security personnel, dark coats – and in between, children, young people, and adults who stop, look at one another, and begin to talk. A luminous presence in the machinery of a highly accelerated global event. For a moment, time itself seemed irrelevant.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that Davos should become such a place. Thomas Mann once described it as a “magic mountain” – a space outside ordinary time, where people are compelled to think differently, feel differently, perceive differently. On this Wednesday evening, something of that enchantment was in the air. Not a retreat from the world, but a brief pause within it. A suspended moment between what is and what might become.

The questions from Bubenbrunnenplatz will be carried forward. In July 2026, the next World Child Forum will take place in Davos; in January 2027, it will return again – with what emerges when people take the time to ask differently. A continuous cycle of collecting, exploring, and returning: the Davos Loop.

What remains is an image: a luminous figure amidst black limousines. People who stop and look upward. And the quiet sense that the future also begins where no one knows exactly where it will lead – but many are willing to set out together.

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