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TRUMP UNVEILS BOARD OF PEACE AT DAVOS



MARKUS SCHREIBER, ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Donald Trump holds the charter during a signing ceremony on his Board of Peace initiative Thursday at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Many top allies opt not to participate

JOSH BOAK, AAMER MADHANI AND WILL WEISSERT
Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland — President Donald Trump on Thursday inaugurated his Board of Peace to lead efforts at maintaining a ceasefire in Israel’s war with Hamas, insisting that “everyone wants to be a part” of the body he said could eventually rival the United Nations — despite many U.S. allies opting not to participate.

In a speech at the World Economic Forum, Trump sought to create momentum for a project to map out a future of the war-torn Gaza Strip that has been overshadowed this week, first by his threats to seize Greenland, then by a dramatic retreat from that push.

“This isn’t the United States, this is for the world,” he said, adding, “I think we can spread it out to other things as we succeed in Gaza.”

The event featured Ali Shaath, the head of a new, future technocratic government in Gaza, announcing that the Rafah border crossing will open in both directions next week. But there was no confirmation of that from Israel, which said only that it would

consider the matter next week.

The Gaza side of the crossing, which runs between Gaza and Egypt, is currently under Israeli military control. Shaath, an engineer and former Palestinian Authority official from Gaza, is overseeing the Palestinian committee set to govern the territory under U.S. supervision.

The new peace board was initially envisioned as a small group of world leaders overseeing the ceasefire, but it has morphed into something far more ambitious — and skepticism about its membership and mandate has led some countries usually closest to Washington to take a pass.

Trump tried not to let those not participating ruin his unveiling party, saying 59 countries had signed onto the board — even though heads of state, top diplomats and other officials from only 19 countries plus the U.S. actually attended the event. He told the group, ranging from Azerbaijan to Paraguay to Hungary, “You’re the most powerful people in the world.”

Trump has spoken about the board replacing some U.N. functions and perhaps even making that entire body obsolete one day. But he was more conciliatory in

his remarks on the sidelines of the forum in the Swiss alps.

“We’ll do it in conjunction with the United Nations,” Trump said, even as he denigrated the U.N. for doing what he said wasn’t enough to calm some conflicts around the globe.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said some countries’ leaders indicated they plan to join but still require approval from their parliaments.

Big questions remain, however, about what the eventual board will look like.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country is still consulting with Moscow’s “strategic partners” before deciding to commit. The Russian was hosting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Thursday in Moscow.

Others are asking why Putin and other authoritarian leaders had even been invited to join. Britain’s foreign secretary, Yvette Cooper, said her country wasn’t signing on “because this is about a legal treaty that raises much broader issues.”

“And we do also have concerns about President Putin being part of something which is talking

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EVAN VUCCI, ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Donald Trump speaks during a Board of Peace charter announcement Thursday during the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Weather sparks state of emergency, uncertain forecast

DAVID MCGEE
Bristol Herald Courier

Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger declared a State of Emergency Thursday due to winter weather expected to impact most of the Commonwealth beginning Saturday and lasting through Monday morning.

Current forecasts have the storm arriving Saturday locally then progressing eastward, reaching the I-95 corridor by evening, according to a statement from the governor’s office. It is expected to impact the entire state throughout the day Sunday and lingering into Monday.

The executive order is designed to help the Commonwealth prepare for, respond to, and recover from any impacts and to streamline processes that help localities and communities affected by the storm.

“Our top priority is the safety of every Virginian. State agencies are mobilized and we are working closely with local governments and utility partners,” the governor said. “Everyone should stay informed, avoid travel when possible, and take precautions to protect themselves and their families as this storm moves through our Commonwealth.”

Just as it has been all week, the forecast remains complex, but precipitation is on the way followed by much colder air next week.

Different parts of the region are expected to see different weather conditions as the forecast has shifted on Thursday.

“This is a complicated forecast and details regarding the location of heaviest snowfall and freezing rain totals remain uncertain,” according to the winter storm advisory issued by the National Weather Service office in Morristown, Tenn. “Significant changes could occur in the coming days so please continue to monitor future forecasts.”

For the Tri-Cities and the western-most counties of Southwest Virginia — Lee, Scott Wise, Washington — snow is expected to begin Saturday afternoon, with a high of 36 degrees. Chance of precipitation is 80%.

A mix of snow and sleet is expected Saturday night with a chance of freezing rain overnight with a low around 25. Chance of precipitation is 100%.

Freezing rain Sunday morning is expected to give way to rain after

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VIRGINIA ‘Caution is watchword’ as federal job losses show up in state revenue

MICHAEL MARTZ
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Virginia’s tax revenues have come to a fork in the road: tax collections continue to exceed expectations because of a heated stock market on one hand, while the labor market is shrinking because of federal government job losses on the other.

The state lost 23,500 federal civilian government jobs last year, including 11,400 in October alone as workers came off the federal payroll after accepting offers of deferred resignation since the inauguration of President Trump a year ago. The first deferred resignation offer was the “Fork in the Road,” made by Elon Musk, then the leader of the new president’s effort to slash the federal workforce and spending.

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