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WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

TRUMP ROLLS OUT 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 US allies opt not to participate amid skepticism

**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.

Please see DAVOS, Page A2

'FOREVER CHEMICALS'

Evers, GOP strike apparent deal on PFAS funds

MITCHELL SCHMIDT
mschmidt@madison.com

More than \$125 million in funds set aside more than two years ago to address "forever chemicals" that contaminate Wisconsin's waterways could finally be heading out the door after Republican lawmakers and Democratic Gov. Tony Evers reached an apparent agreement on how to spend the money and enforce cleanup of the cancer-causing materials.

Recent amendments to a pair of bills first introduced back in March — AB 130 and AB 131 — mark the latest in a years-long saga in Wisconsin to help with the state's ongoing battle with PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, in communities such as Marinette, Wausau, La Crosse and Madison.

While the state's 2023-25 biennial budget created a \$125 million PFAS Trust Fund, which has now reached about \$132 million with accrued interest, those funds have sat untouched while lawmakers and Evers

have tried to hammer out a deal to distribute those dollars while addressing concerns over enforcement of PFAS mitigation.

But support for the updated measure isn't universal. Some organizations, including those in the state's paper industry and Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, the state's largest business organization, have raised concerns that the bill could include unconstitutional exemptions for certain entities.

"There's a lot of opinions about it, but when you think of this on the whole, it really is a good bill and a good first step," bill co-author Sen. Eric Wimberger, R-Oconto, said at a public hearing on the bill Wednesday.

Evers said in a statement the amendments follow negotiations with GOP lawmakers and the state Department of Natural Resources and he is "really optimistic we're finally going to be able to get something done here after months of successful and productive negotiations."

Evers vetoed a previous version of the bill in 2024, saying at the time the measure included unnecessary provisions that would make it more difficult for the DNR to enforce PFAS cleanup efforts.

"I'm grateful Republican lawmakers have formally introduced an amendment that reflects the changes we've agreed to so far as a sign of good faith," Evers said. "We still have some important details to iron out to make sure DNR has the resources they need, but we've made a lot of progress. So, I'm really hopeful."

Before the measure reaches Evers' desk, it will first need to pass both legislative chambers.

Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg, told reporters Tuesday the measure represents "a move in the right direction, and I think it's a bill that hopefully our caucus can get behind and finally get that money out the door."

The office of Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, did not immediately

respond to a request for comment on the bill Wednesday.

Health problems

PFAS have been linked to health problems including low birthweight, cancer and liver disease, and have been shown to make vaccines less effective. They're called forever chemicals because they do not break down in the environment and can accumulate in animal tissues and the human body.

The proposed legislation would require the state DNR to provide grants to communities for PFAS testing in a variety of sources, including private wells, public water systems, wastewater treatment plants and public, private or tribal schools and child care centers. It also includes protections for current landowners who did not cause the contamination, funds for local governments and emergency bottled water, and money to replace contaminated wells.

Please see PFAS, Page A2