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The Latest: Soros unveils \$1B university plan, blasts Trump



Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, speaks during a plenary session during the 50th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, WEF, in Davos, Switzerland, Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2020. (Gian Ehrenzeller/Keystone via AP) [more >](#)

By - Associated Press - Thursday, January 23, 2020

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) - The Latest on the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland (all times local):

10:15 p.m.

George Soros says he's injecting \$1 billion into a new university network that the 89-year-old billionaire investor calls the "most important and most enduring project of my life."

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“And I would like to see it realized while I am still around,” he told journalists on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Soros, a vociferous critic of U.S. President Donald Trump, announced the plans at the end of a speech to reporters during which he criticized Trump as a “con man,” the “ultimate narcissist” and a “climate denier.”

The philanthropist who made his billions in the markets, also reiterated his criticisms of other alleged autocrats. He branded as dictators both Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary - Soros’ native country.

Aside from the invective, Soros presented his plans for the Open Society University Network. His office said OSUN would pull together higher-education networks worldwide with “in-person and online discussions” - and will look for partners.

The network will be built around Soros’ Central European University and Bard College, north of New York City.

“To demonstrate our commitment to OSUN, we are contributing \$1 billion to it,” he said. “But we can’t build a global network on our own; we will need partner institutions and supporters from all around the world to join us in this enterprise.”

“I consider OSUN the most important and enduring project of my life and I should like to see it implemented while I am still around,” Soros said.

3:40 p.m.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel says that climate protection may become a matter of survival for Europe and the entire planet.

“The question of being able to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement could become a question of survival,” Merkel said in a speech Thursday at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. “That’s why there’s pressure to act.”

The chancellor said the world needs to act together, but at the same time each country has to contribute to help make Europe become “climate neutral” by 2050.

“These are obviously transformations of a gigantic historical scale,” Merkel said. “These transformations basically mean that in the next thirty years we have to leave behind the entire way of business and life that we got used to during the industrial age.”

She warned of conflicts in connection with the fight against climate change between those who deny climate change is happening and those who see it as the top priority. She said that both sides need to continue talking to each other.

Referring to youth movements against climate change, Merkel said the “impatience of the youth” had to be received “positively and constructively.”

2:15 p.m.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin will raise concerns over Britain’s potential use of Huawei technology in next-generation ultrafast mobile networks when he visits London to meet his counterpart this weekend.

The British government, which is expected to make a final decision next week on the Chinese tech company's future role, has indicated it may not entirely shun the company, in contrast to the U.S., which has voiced cyberespionage fears.

Mnuchin said Thursday at the World Economic Forum that he will discuss the issue, alongside other matters such as trade, when he meets Britain's Treasury chief Sajid Javid in London over the weekend.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said earlier this month that he doesn't want to prejudice intelligence cooperation with the U.S. but also that the British public deserves the best possible technology. He said critics should suggest alternatives to Huawei, whose few rivals include Sweden's Ericsson and Finland's Nokia.

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1:25 p.m.

Turkey's foreign minister has reiterated a proposal to establish a NATO-lead committee to review possible threats to the alliance from Turkey's purchase of a Russian-made missile defense system.

Speaking Thursday at a panel discussion at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said he believes the S-400 missiles don't pose a threat to NATO, of which Turkey is a member.

"Let the experts assess this," Cavusoglu said.

The United States and other NATO members say the Russian system threatens NATO and the U.S.-led F-35 stealth jet program. Washington has removed Turkey from the F-35 program and U.S. lawmakers have called for sanctions over the Turkish government's decision to proceed with the purchase and deployment of the Russian technology.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told the panel the alliance has so far not been able to reach an agreement on Turkey's committee proposal.

Stoltenberg said: "We will try to do whatever we can to find a way to solve this issue because it's one of the issues that has created problems inside the alliance. There's no way to deny that."

11:35 a.m.

Ukraine's prime minister says he is "not planning to go anywhere," trying to tamp down "rumors" that he or his government might soon resign.

Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk was initially evasive about whether he would step down during a question and answer session during a breakfast event Thursday about Ukraine on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

Last week, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy rejected Honcharuk's offer to resign after the prime minister was caught on tape saying Zelenskiy - a former sitcom star with no previous political experience - knows nothing about the economy.

"I am not planning to go anywhere. We have wonderful relations inside the team with the president," he told a packed Davos hotel ballroom.

Honcharuk had initially dodged a question about whether he would resign, speaking only more broadly about his government's plans.

"I don't want to disseminate the rumors: The government is not leaving, the government is planning to continue working, we're not planning any resignations," he said. "There are so many provocations, manipulations around the government."

Honcharuk only admitted he had no plans to leave after being pressed by the panel

moderator, Fareed Zakaria of CNN.

10:50 a.m.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin says Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg is in no position to give economic advice until she's gone to college and come out with an economics degree.

At a press briefing at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss town of Davos, Mnuchin took a swipe at the 17-year-old environmental campaigner for her recommendation that both the public and private sectors should divest from fossil fuels.

When asked how that would affect the U.S. economic model, Mnuchin took a swipe at Thunberg.

"Is she the chief economist? Who is she? I'm confused," he said. Then following a brief pause, he said "it was a joke."

"After she goes and studies economics in college, she can come back and explain that to us," he concluded.

Over the past year, Thunberg has taken issue with many aspects of U.S. policy, not least President Donald Trump's decision to pull the country out of the Paris accord to limit global warming.

Mnuchin insisted that U.S. policy has been misinterpreted, and that Trump "absolutely believes" in a clean environment.

The U.S., Mnuchin said, has been a leader in reducing carbon emissions. "What the president objects to is the Paris agreement, because he thought it was an unfair

agreement for the United States.”

10:45 a.m.

The U.S. is talking up the prospects of tying up a trade deal with Britain this year and thinks it should be pretty straightforward to accomplish given how similar the two economies are.

At a press briefing at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss ski resort of Davos, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said he’s heading to London this weekend to discuss an array of issues with his counterpart Sajid Javid, most notably with regard to a trade deal.

Mnuchin said it’s an “absolute priority” for President Donald Trump and that he expects to complete it “within this year.”

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