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## **World leaders gathering at Davos face calls for bold action to turn the tide on cancer**

World leaders will face calls for bold action to respond to the rising human and economic toll of cancer when they meet in Davos at this year's World Economic Forum (WEF).

Two sessions have been scheduled where international political, civic and business leaders have the chance to discuss how they can work with the cancer community to turn the tide on cancer:

- Cancer Pathway to a Cure – What are the breakthroughs in cancer prevention and therapy? –an interactive dinner session on Friday January 23<sup>rd</sup>, and
- Globalization of Non-Communicable Diseases, a working session on the morning of Saturday January 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Franco Cavalli**, Chair of the [World Oncology Forum](#) – a gathering of leading clinicians, researchers, policy makers and industry representatives, convened and independently funded by the [European School of Oncology](#) in collaboration with [The Lancet](#) – will be leading calls at both sessions for agreement on a package of actions that could accelerate progress towards finding a cure or long-term control for cancer, and massively expand global access not just to prevention but also early detection, treatment and care.

This will be the first time cancer has been discussed at the World Economic Forum. **Franco Cavalli**, who played the key role in getting the issue onto the agenda said:

“Every year cancer drains an estimated \$2 trillion from the world economy in terms of lost output and the cost of treatment, equivalent to around 1.5% of global GDP, as well as wreaking terrible suffering on millions of individuals, families and communities.

“I greatly welcome the opportunity to discuss with international political, business and civic leaders about how we can work together to turn the tide on cancer.

“The message I will be bringing to Davos concerns the urgent need to work together to remove barriers that are impeding the development of and access to effective cancer therapies.

“We need to find new models of public–private partnership and change the whole ‘ecosystem’ for developing and evaluating new cancer therapies, to speed up progress and cut the development costs. We also need to draw on lessons learned from impressive progress in tackling cancer that has been achieved in recent years in countries such as Thailand and Brazil, as well as the successes of global initiatives in other disease areas including the GAVI alliance and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

“There is a strong consensus among a broad section of the world oncology community about how we can turn the situation around, which we have spelled out in detail in appeals agreed at the World Oncology Forum in 2012 and 2014. However, it will require concerted and bold action at national and international levels.

“The World Economic Forum, with its emphasis on leadership and a public–private partnership approach to resolving major global challenges is the right place to discuss this issue, and I hope all sides will grasp this opportunity.”

Participants in the [World Oncology Forum](#) and signatories to the appeals include **Richard Schilsky**, Chief Medical Officer and past President of the [American Society of Clinical Oncology](#) (ASCO); **Martine Piccart**, President of [ECCO](#), the European Cancer Congress; **Mary Gospodarowicz**, immediate past-President of the [Union for International Cancer Control](#) (UICC) and director of the [Princess Margaret Cancer Centre](#) in Toronto; **Paul Workman**, head of the Institute of Cancer Research <http://www.icr.ac.uk> in London; **Alberto Costa**, scientific director of the [European School of Oncology](#) in Milan, **Lex Eggermont**, head of the [Gustave Roussy Cancer Centre in Paris](#), Hiroshi Nakagama, director of the [National Cancer Center Research Institute in Japan](#), and Luiz Antonio Santini, director of the [National Cancer Institute of Brazil](#).

**Richard Schilsky**, ASCO’s Chief Medical Officer said:

“Cancer continues to exact an enormous toll on all human populations and its impact will be greatest in the developing countries of the world in coming years. A concerted global effort is therefore required to insure that all people at risk for cancer and those who develop it obtain the best possible health outcomes.

“Achieving this goal requires, first, widespread dissemination and adoption of diagnostic strategies and therapies known to be effective in detecting cancer early and treating it effectively and, second, continued innovation in understanding the causes of cancer and in translating that knowledge to new and more effective treatments.

“Government investment in procurement and dissemination of effective treatments is vital as is public-private partnership in the efficient development of new therapies.

“WEF is the ideal forum to discuss these complex issues as global health has an enormous impact on the global economy and a robust global economy can generate many of the resources necessary to improve global health. I am hopeful that the

discussions at WEF will represent the beginning of a concerted global effort to bring cancer under control around the world.”

**Paul Workman**, head of the Institute of Cancer Research in London, said:

“There is an urgent need reconfigure the whole ecosystem for cancer drug discovery and development to increase the number of truly innovative drugs that will make a real difference to cancer outcomes.

“We need to overcome the big problem of cancer evolution, tumour heterogeneity and drug resistance. 95 per cent of the 500 genes implicated in cancer have no drugs targeted at them, and we need more risk-taking approaches to address this major deficit, so we can build better combination treatments for long-term control and survival.

“We need more collaborative programmes to carry out this type of discovery work and progress truly innovative agents, rather than ‘me-too’ drugs. Risk-sharing public-private partnerships will be the best way to take full advantage of the resources of academia and industry.

“We also need creative solutions to get innovative drugs approved early, so that they can show some initial benefit in patients with late-stage drug-resistant cancers and can then be progressed to reveal greater clinical benefit in earlier stage cancers and in combination. This will require adaptive licensing and payment approaches.

“The WEF is an excellent venue to discuss how to reconfigure the cancer drug ecosystem. The approaches we are arguing for to increase innovation in cancer drug discovery and development could yield major economic and societal advantages with tremendous benefits to sustainable healthcare worldwide.”

**Mary Gospodarowicz**, immediate past President of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and director of the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto said:

“Radiotherapy is critical form of cancer treatment. It has been proven to be feasible, affordable, and safe. One of two cancer patients benefit from radiotherapy. While the developed countries benefit from the newest technologies, more than 3 billion people in low and middle income countries have no access to radiotherapy at all. It is infuriating to realise that if we do not act now – by 2035 close to four million life-years will be lost unnecessarily in low-income countries alone and many more would have suffered.”

**Alberto Costa**, scientific director of the European School of Oncology in Milan said,

“The global cancer epidemic urgently needs a co-ordinated high-level response, which is why I’m delighted that this issue has made it onto the Davos agenda. Global access to effective cancer treatment at a sustainable cost can become a reality provided available resources are used to greatest effect. Surgery, for instance, is responsible for more than 50% of successes in cancer treatment. So investing in specialist training for surgeons, and for the pathologists who need to check the cancerous tissue has all been eliminated, could by itself transform the prospects for a large proportion of patients. Bold decisions now could turn the tide on the cancer, and the havoc it is inflicting on communities and economies.”

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Further information

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**Images:** High-resolution images of Franco Cavalli, Richard Schilsky, Mary Gospodarowicz, Paul Workman, Alberto Costa taken during the World Oncology Forum in 24-25 October 2014 Lugano, Switzerland, can be downloaded from the ESO website [here](#).

**About Franco Cavalli:** Franco Cavalli is the chair of the World Oncology Forum, chair of the Scientific Committee of the European School of Oncology and the Scientific Director of the Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland. He founded *Annals of Oncology*, and was Editor-in-Chief from 1990 to 2000. He is recognised as a world expert in the field of malignant lymphomas and new drug development.

Cavalli has played a leading role in efforts to improve global access to cancer care and alert world leaders to the cancer epidemic that is now hitting low- and middle-income countries. He has direct experience developing cancer projects in developing countries, particularly in Central America.

In 2006 he was elected President of the Union for International Cancer Control, where he went on to play a key role in formulating the World Cancer Declaration – the first concise roadmap of practical actions to control cancer that can be implemented anywhere in the world.

As President of the Scientific Committee of the European School of Oncology (ESO), he conceived and organised the first World Oncology Forum in Lugano, Switzerland, in 2012 where an appeal “Stop Cancer Now!” was formulated and launched.

Based on the scientific material generated by the first World Oncology Forum, he convinced the organisers of the World Economic Forum (WEF) to include an initial discussion about the growing cancer epidemics at the pre-Davos summit, in September 2014, in Tianjin, China, which paved the way for the inclusion of two sessions on cancer in the forthcoming World Economic Forum.

Cavalli is now leading efforts to launch a Global Fund for Cancer, working with a group of high-level political contacts, including the recently elected President of Uruguay, Dr. Tavares Vasquez (a radio-oncologist). He hopes to put this idea at the centre of the working meeting at Davos that will address the Globalisation of Non-Communicable Diseases.

**About the [World Oncology Forum \(WOF\)](#):** The World Oncology Forum is a gathering of leading clinicians, researchers, epidemiologists, policy makers and industry representatives, convened by the European School of Oncology in partnership with *The Lancet*. [The first WOF](#) was convened in Lugano, Switzerland on 26–27 October 2012, with the task of evaluating progress in the fight against cancer. A final session, chaired by the Editor-in-Chief of *The Lancet*, Richard Horton, agreed on set of strategies to turn the tide on the global cancer epidemic that formed the basis of [the Stop Cancer Now! appeal](#). [A second WOF](#), held in October 2014, issued appeals for specific actions from governments, policy makers and international agencies that are required for speeding up [progress towards a cure](#) and

expanding global [access to early detection, treatment and care](#). WOF is independent of any commercial sponsorship. It is funded by the European School of Oncology's sustaining Foundations, the Swiss Cancer League, the Swiss Cancer Research Foundation and the City of Lugano and Canton of Ticino authorities.

The full text of the World Oncology Forum appeals, together with the list of signatories can be found [here](#).

Further information about WOF is available at: [www.worldoncologyforum.org](http://www.worldoncologyforum.org)

**About the [European School of Oncology \(ESO\)](#):** Milan-based ESO is an independent, non-profit organisation that is dedicated to improving the care and treatment that cancer patients receive. The School was founded in 1982 with the aim of reducing deaths from cancer due to late diagnosis and inadequate treatment. Over the past 30 years it has grown into one of the most important providers of cancer education for physicians, nurses, patient advocates and the media worldwide. Further information about the School is available from [www.eso.net](http://www.eso.net)

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