

WEF Roundup: Disease X. Digital ID ‘Very Necessary’ for Tracking the Unvaccinated. AI Can Speed Up Development of New Vaccines

By [Michael Nevradakis](#)

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The threat of a [new pandemic](#) and so-called “[misinformation](#).” The future of democracy. The future impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in society. The “green agenda.”

These were just some of the topics on the agenda at the [annual meeting of the World Economic Forum](#) (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, which concluded today.

Some of the highlights of this year’s meeting included warnings of how a yet-unknown “[Disease X](#)” may cause the next pandemic, discussions on how AI could lead to the rapid development of new vaccines, and talk about how AI could either fall victim to — or filter out — so-called “misinformation” and “disinformation.”

‘We don’t want to wait a year before we get the vaccine’

Warnings were accompanied by more optimistic — from the perspective of the meeting’s participants — outlooks about the role AI could play in tackling future pandemics, such as through the rapid development of new vaccines.

[Jeremy Hunt](#), the U.K.’s [chancellor of the Exchequer](#), said during a Thursday [panel discussion](#) — in which [Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla](#) participated — that “when we have the next pandemic, we don’t want to have to wait a year before we get the vaccine.”

“If AI can shrink the time it takes to get that vaccine to a month, then that is a massive step forward for humanity,” Hunt said.

Digital ID ‘Very Necessary’ for Tracking the Unvaccinated

During another Thursday panel discussion, [Queen Máxima of the Netherlands](#) said that digital ID is “[very necessary](#)” for the provision of a range of public services — and suggested that it can be [used to track](#) the unvaccinated.

[Digital ID](#) “is very necessary for financial services, but not only. It is also good for school enrollment, it is also good for health — who actually got a vaccination or not,” she said.

Queen Maxima of the Netherlands at WEF in Davos: [Digital ID] is very necessary for financial services, but not only - it is also good for school enrollment; it is also good for health — who actually got a vaccination or not" [#DigitalID #WEF24 https://t.co/DJiO8nSih pic.twitter.com/RgYA2ahXS0](#)

— Tim Hinchliffe (@TimHinchliffe) [January 18, 2024](#)

Bourla elaborated on the possibilities he sees for AI in the realm of healthcare.

Answering a question from CNN journalist [Fareed Zakaria](#), Bourla said,

“Our job is to make breakthroughs that change patients’ lives. With AI, I can do it faster and I can do it better.”

One example identified by Bourla was the role AI played in developing [Paxlovid](#), a prescription oral medication marketed as a treatment for [COVID-19](#).

“It was developed in four months,” Bourla said, whereas development of such a [drug](#) “usually takes four years.” He said AI helped significantly reduce the amount of time needed for the “drug discovery” process, where “You really synthesize millions of molecules and then you try to discover within them, which one works.”

He credited this breakthrough with saving “millions of lives.”

“I truly believe that we are about to enter a scientific renaissance in life sciences because of this coexistence of advancements in [technology](#) and biology,” Bourla said. “AI is a very powerful tool. In the hands of bad people [it] can do bad things for the world, but in the hands of good people [it] can do great things for the world.”

Pfizer CEO, Albert Bourla on AI biotech regulations, and it's use for the next pandemic: "in the hands of bad people it can do bad things But in the hands of good people, it can do great things for the world... the benefits clearly outweigh the risks." [https://t.co/xfKZbVBy0b pic.twitter.com/RtuvkR0EHk](#)

— Efrain Flores Monsanto 🇵🇷 (@realmonsanto) [January 18, 2024](#)

World Health Organization **Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** warned on Wednesday during the “[Preparing for Disease X](#)” panel discussion that the world must prepare for a future pandemic, which may be caused by a yet-unknown “Disease X.”

Panelists warned that “Disease X” — which is included in the WHO’s list of “[priority diseases](#)” — could “result in [20 times more fatalities](#) than the coronavirus pandemic.”

Tedros: “Covid (was) the first Disease X” pic.twitter.com/bp7x1Xuxy6

— Ian Miles Cheong (@stillgray) [January 17, 2024](#)

Aside from “Disease X,” Tedros and other participants on the panel also discussed the need for a “[pandemic agreement](#)” and the urgency of having it approved at this year’s [World Health Assembly](#), to be held between May 27 and June 1 in Geneva.

‘We’re going to have digital doctors, digital people’

During the “[Technology in a Turbulent World](#)” panel, panelists offered predictions as to other ways in which AI is likely to become integrated into people’s lives.

Marc Benioff, chair and CEO of Salesforce, said that while “AI is really not at a point where we’re replacing human beings, it’s really at a point where we’re augmenting them.”

He cited, as hypothetical examples, the possibility that WEF participants could ask an AI application such as [ChatGPT](#) “what’s some good questions I could ask” during their panel, or that radiologists could use AI “to help read my CT scan into my MRI.”

“We’re just about to get to that breakthrough where we’re going to go, ‘Wow, it’s almost like it’s a digital person,” Benioff said. However, reflecting the theme of this year’s WEF meeting — “[Rebuilding Trust](#)” — he added, “When we get to that point, we’re going to ask ourselves, ‘Do we trust it?’”

“We’re going to have digital doctors, digital people, these digital people are going to merge and there’s going to have to be a level of trust,” Benioff said.

Similarly, **Sam Altman**, CEO of OpenAI — which maintains a [partnership with Microsoft](#) — said that AI will help “everyone’s job ... operate at a little bit higher of a level of abstraction.”

“We will all have access to a lot more capability and we’ll still make decisions. They may trend more towards curation over time, but we’ll make decisions about what should happen in the world,” he said.

Julie Sweet, chair and CEO of [Accenture](#), also expressed optimism over AI’s future role, saying that AI is “massively going to improve social services.”

To build “trust,” Benioff called for more regulation, alluding to the social media ecosystem and “misinformation” on such platforms.

“We have to also turn to those regulators and say, ‘Hey, if you look at [social media](#) over the last decade, it’s been kind of a f***ing s**t show.’ It’s pretty bad. We don’t want that in our AI industry. We want to have a good healthy partnership with these moderators and with these regulators.”

Altman suggested that one way to develop such “partnerships” is to train AI to locate and identify information from certain preferred sources.

He said:

“What we want to do with the content owners, like The New York Times and deals that we have done with many other publishers, and we’ll do more over time, is when a user says, ‘[Hey, ChatGPT](#), what happened at Davos today?’ we would like to display content, link out, show brands of places like The New York Times or the Wall Street Journal or any other great publication and say, ‘Here’s what happened today. Here’s this real-time information.’”

Bourla also called for more regulation of AI, saying that while he was “certain right now that the benefits clearly outweigh the risks,” he feels “we need regulation right now.”

Hunt, however, said that minimal regulation is the best approach at this time.

“I think we need to be light touch because ... it’s such an emerging stage. You can kill the golden goose before it has a chance to grow,” he said.

AI Could be Used to Educate Students About ‘Misinformation’

WEF leaders also addressed the future role of AI in education, in particular during the WEF’s “[Education Meets AI](#)” panel on Thursday.

Education Meets AI with [@StojmenovaDuh](#) ([@digitalSLO](#)), [@ahmad_belhou](#) ([@MOEUAEofficial](#)), [@hadip](#) ([@Codeorg](#)), [@NzingaQ](#) ([@SABCPortal](#)) and [@jtarr1](#) ([@Skillsoft](#)) [#wef24](#) <https://t.co/6oZtFqHzVv>

— World Economic Forum (@wef) [January 18, 2024](#)

[According to Forbes](#), panelists, including government officials from Slovenia and the United Arab Emirates, suggested that AI will provide “novel opportunities for deeply personalized learning and tutoring.”

Ahmad bin Abdullah Humaid Belhoul Al Falasi, minister of education of the United Arab Emirates, called this “democratic tutoring,” suggesting that AI would provide “scalable” tutoring “available to all” [outside the classroom](#), which will supplement classroom teaching and which “leaves the hardest part — the soft skills — to teachers.”

[Nzinga Qunta](#), an anchor with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, suggested that such tutoring would not be restricted in terms of age or physical space.

Panelists also provided reassurances that AI would not lead to the elimination of human jobs — but suggested that people won’t lose their jobs due to AI “but by people who know how to use AI,” Forbes reported.

The “risk of mis- and disinformation” was also highlighted during the discussion, with panelists suggesting that “critical thinking” can enable students to identify the “hazardous” risks of “misinformation” and “disinformation.”

‘Misinformation’ Can Lead to ‘Civil Unrest’

“[Misinformation](#)” was indeed highly prominent on the agenda of this year’s WEF meeting. The WEF’s [Global Risks Report](#), released Jan. 10, named “misinformation” and “disinformation” derived from AI as the top risk facing the world over the next two years, and the fifth-highest risk over the next decade.

According to the report, “Foreign and domestic actors alike will leverage misinformation and disinformation to widen societal and political divides” in the next two years, posing a risk to elections in countries such as the U.S., U.K. and India and a risk of “civil unrest” across the world.

“What’s more, [false information and societal polarization](#) are inherently intertwined, with potential to amplify each other,” according to [Saadia Zahidi](#), the WEF’s managing director, for which “innovation and trustworthy decision-making” are required. However, she said this “is only possible in a world with alignment on the facts.”

WEF's Managing Director Saadia Zahidi says mis- and disinformation are the #1 risk in the world today.

I agree completely. Yet who spews the most disinformation, lies and gaslighting propaganda - while engaging in massive censorship and suppression of truth?

- WEF

-... pic.twitter.com/CQGypo4DLU

— J Kerner (@JKernerOT) [January 18, 2024](#)

‘There is a risk the wrong leaders are elected’

The WEF’s warnings about the “threat” of “misinformation” and “disinformation” is closely aligned with fears expressed by WEF meeting participants regarding how AI could impact democracy and the electoral process.

In recent days, a video went viral on social media showing WEF co-founder and chairman [Klaus Schwab](#) in a discussion with [Sergey Brin](#), co-founder and former president of [Google](#). Schwab suggested a hypothetical scenario where “you do not even have to have elections anymore” because AI “can already predict the winner” — a scenario Brin did not explicitly dismiss.

Klaus Schwab to Sergey Brin: Who needs elections? Let A.I. do it

"With AI analytical power, and now we go into a predictive power... You do not even have to have elections anymore...because we know what the result will be." pic.twitter.com/wWkloz3zMA

— Trending News (@Trend_War_Newss) [January 19, 2024](#)

Even though that video was frequently presented in social media posts as originating from this year’s WEF meeting, it is actually from a discussion at the [WEF’s annual meeting in](#)

[2017](#). Yet, other statements at this year's meeting also referenced elections and governance.

During a panel discussion today on "[Global Risks: What's in the Mail?](#)" [Haslinda Amin](#), Bloomberg News' chief international correspondent for Southeast Asia, suggested "there is a risk the wrong leaders are elected" in this year's elections in key countries.

Responding to Amin, [Douglas L. Peterson](#), president and CEO of S&P Global, said this "is one of the top risks for this year" and added, "We also need to make sure we stay engaged through global institutions, like the UN, like NATO."

BREAKING - WEF moderator says elections in 2024 are a risk because "there is a risk the wrong leaders are elected"

S&P Global President said "We also need to make sure we stay engaged through global institutions, like the UN, like NATO"

(They are terrified of Trump) [#WEF24 pic.twitter.com/LrLmin9WMK](#)

— Andreas Wailzer (@Andreas_Wailzer) [January 19, 2024](#)

And during his [special address](#) at the WEF meeting, [António Guterres](#), the United Nation's secretary-general, called for "effective mechanisms of global governance" as part of "a new multipolar global order."

Building 'International Economic Order' Required to Tackle 'Climate Crisis'

Numerous WEF meeting participants also warned about the risks posed by climate change — and used the opportunity to call for more money and investments for "green" initiatives.

Speaking earlier this week at the WEF meeting, [John Kerry](#), U.S. special presidential envoy for climate, said 2023 "was literally the most disruptive, climate-disrupted, most climate consequential, negative year in human history," and that as a result, there is no more "space for debate or, frankly, procrastination any longer."

At [#WEF24](#), [@JohnKerry](#) says "2023 ... was literally the most disruptive, climate-disrupted, most climate consequential, negative year in human history, and [this] really doesn't leave us any space for debate, or frankly procrastination any longer." [pic.twitter.com/Mo7qd8SNYX](#)

— Tom Elliott (@tomselliott) [January 17, 2024](#)

To respond to this, WEF meeting participants said more money is needed. For instance, [Tharman Shanmugaratnam](#), president of Singapore, said "governments are going to have to invest significantly more than they've invested before."

And according to [Chrystia Freeland](#), deputy prime minister of [Canada](#), government intervention is needed as part of the transition away from carbon — a process which she

said will create “more jobs, more growth, more manufacturing.”

ECB Pres. [@Lagarde](#): “It will cost no less than 620 billion per year to actually move the green transition further into the hope of a clean energy environment & a serious reduction of our CO2 emission.” [#WEF24](#)
pic.twitter.com/uEg0WqXEvc

— Tom Elliott (@tomselliott) [January 18, 2024](#)

The price tag for such interventions, according to [Christine Lagarde](#), president of the [European Central Bank](#), is “no less than 620 billion per year to actually move the green transition further.”

When confronted on the streets of Davos Thursday by True North Media journalist Andrew Lawton, Lagarde dodged questions about whether central bank digital currencies, such as the [digital euro](#) introduced by Lagarde, could be used to control people.

I asked Christine Lagarde, the head of the European Central Bank, how people could be confident governments wouldn't use digital currencies as a tool of control.

Her response: "I'm not speaking because I'm in a quiet period."
pic.twitter.com/m21FI9XVOp

— Andrew Lawton (@AndrewLawton) [January 18, 2024](#)

“I’m not speaking because I’m in a quiet period,” was Lagarde’s response.

In another confrontation on Davos’ streets, Rebel News reporters targeted [Philipp Hildebrand](#), vice chairman of [BlackRock](#), one of the world’s largest investment firms, asking him a series of questions about [BlackRock’s support for “ESG”](#) — environmental, social and corporate governance.

We spotted the Vice Chairman of Blackrock on the streets of Davos during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

So many questions, zero answers.

More at <https://t.co/MgttzQuZWX> pic.twitter.com/O7IOJVZYEF

— Lincoln Jay (@lincolnmjay) [January 19, 2024](#)

Hildebrand did not respond to any of the reporters’ questions.

For years we were laughed at and mocked as conspiracy theorists because we alerted people to the fact that the self-proclaimed global elite are planning a 'New World Order'.

At this year's WEF Davos summit, [@borgebrende](#), the president of the World

Economic Forum, openly... pic.twitter.com/lKzKHw5TdG

— Dr. Simon Goddek (@goddeketal) [January 18, 2024](#)

And [Jake Sullivan](#), national security adviser of the U.S., tied several threads together, suggesting on Tuesday during a special address that “the international economic order” could be built or updated “in ways that ... address the climate crisis.”

More than [60 heads of state](#) and 1,600 business leaders were among [this year’s 2,800 participants](#) from 120 countries.

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Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D., based in Athens, Greece, is a senior reporter for *The Defender* and part of the rotation of hosts for CHD.TV’s “Good Morning CHD.”

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