



Statement of GERD LEIPOLD, Executive Director Greenpeace International (Amsterdam),  
at the "Public Eye Awards 2007" in Davos

## Four good reasons why Greenpeace participates at the WEF

Over the next four days, we will hear amazing speeches in Davos, and you might be tempted into thinking some sort of mass conversion has taken place. Company after company, politician after politician will lament climate change, express their deep concerns and claim to move away from business as usual. In short: What might have been said at the World Social Forum a few years ago, has now become the language of the World Economic Forum. It seems like an astonishing step forward.

But let's not be naive. Climate change progressed whilst it was being denied, and it continues to progress now that it has been acknowledged. While the chimneys keep blasting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the hot air from conference rooms does not make any difference to the real world, no matter how many crocodile tears they shed here in Davos or in the pages of the so-called sustainability reports.

There is no doubt that the world is changing. And that's not because the powerful acknowledge it, but because the exploitation of planet earth continues. We dredge fish out of the oceans faster than they can reproduce. Industrial fleets empty the waters where local fishermen once made their living sustainably. We cut down ancient forests to grow Soya and to produce disposable wood and paper products such as toilet paper and plywood. Our thirst for fossil fuels is saturating the earth's atmosphere with greenhouse gases causing glaciers to melt and storms to become more destructive. Wars are being fought to secure access to oil.

And make no mistake: Many of the people, who indeed have changed this planet in this way - and continue to do so - will meet and talk here this week. But talking is not enough. They have to take full corporate, political, and personal responsibility and act accordingly now. As business leaders see themselves as the promoters of public debate, and as politicians from all over the world participate, the WEF is no longer a private meeting. Agenda setting at a private meeting is a predemocratic model. Therefore, we need openness not just in a few public fora but for all forms of creative protests of civil society here and elsewhere.

So, how can I justify my participation in the WEF on behalf of Greenpeace? Simply, because it is important that the agenda setting is not left to the powerful. It is, because those few delegates affect the lives of billions of people who are neither present nor represented at the WEF. It is, because someone needs to mention that good intentions for the future do not replace the responsibility for the present and the past. It is, because those corporations and the people in them that make genuine steps forward deserve acknowledgement and support. And those, who only want to do greenwashing, must hear on the spot that they will not get away with it any longer.

As the world experiences its biggest environmental crisis and even the corporations slowly but surely become aware of it, we as members of civil society face a huge task. It is up to us to create the pressure that turns words into actions. It is up to us, to keep raising the demand for corporate accountability, it is up to us to compare promises with actions, it is up to us to distinguish real solutions from window dressing. We have to expose exploitation and destruction and, by the same token, support genuine change. We have to insist on and participate in the democratic debate. And we have to claim the space for those, who are not listened to and suffer the most from corporate and political misdeeds. In short: It is up to us to put rights over power, care over money, peace over war.

This is what the Public Eye stands for. This is the message, which it has spread for the last eight years very effectively. Today this symbolic index finger right next to the world's biggest business is more important than ever. I am very happy to carry this message over to the WEF.