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New York Forum: The New, More Focused Davos?

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What's Your Reaction?

Might New York be the new Davos?

If Richard Attias — who produced the World Economic Forum for 13 years and launched the Clinton Global Initiative — has his way, the answer is yes.

While the global elite descend on Davos this week, Attias is busy planning for the New York Forum, to be held in New York City in June. The event is designed as a "cooperative dialogue among the world's top CEO's, financial leaders and government regulators," according to an announcement.

"Davos is very global now and it's a great forum but you have over 300 sessions, about all issues from health to culture to sports to even anti-aging," Attias said in an interview conducted by phone from Munich. "And we know living in New York that the major, major issue today is to try to find solutions for the economy. How can we help social issues, how can we finance health if we don't have a very healthy economy? So I thought it is definitely the time to focus, to discuss, to work on economic issues."

Attias said he chose New York both because it is a financial center and because of the energy in the city.

"When I was in New York, just after September 11th — when I moved Davos to New York — I spent four months in New York and I was really, really impressed by the way New Yorkers were reacting, were spending, were working, were united," he said. "And I found in New York, which is now my city with my family, something which is magic. Everybody knows about the energy, about the creativity of New York, but you feel it really when you live there everyday. I made a bet with myself which was to one day create an event in New York, because New York really deserves to host great events."

Attias lives on the Upper East Side with his wife, Cecilia (the ex-wife of French President Nicolas Sarkozy).

But Attias also stressed a practical reason for hosting a global economic forum in New York.

"Of the Fortune 200 companies, I believe 40 are headquartered in New York," he said. "When companies are cutting costs in the present climate, it makes sense to have an economic forum in the city where most of them are found. I want a very strong presence from American companies and leaders, but I also want to bring business leaders from Europe, from Asia, and from the Middle East."