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THE CATALYTIC POWER OF PHILANTHROPIC CAPITAL

HIGH-LEVEL PHILANTHROPY ROUNDTABLE THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM ANNUAL MEETING 2026





High-Level Philanthropy Roundtable

The Catalytic Power of Philanthropic Capital

21 January 2026, 11:00–12.30 | House of Switzerland, Salon Fédéral, Davos

1. Context and Purpose

As the need to mobilise private capital for sustainable development becomes increasingly urgent, philanthropic and catalytic capital play a critical role in addressing risk, market gaps, and early-stage constraints. Yet catalytic interventions often remain fragmented and difficult to scale.

SIFI convened this high-level roundtable in Davos to enable a focused, experience-based discussion on how catalytic capital can more effectively mobilise private investment and contribute to systemic impact.





2. Opening and Strategic Framing

The session opened with welcoming remarks by **Pietro Lazzeri**, Head of the Economic Cooperation and Development Division at the **Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)**, who emphasised the importance of blended finance and public-private collaboration in addressing structural development challenges.

Josien Sluijs, Independent Executive President of SIFI, introduced SIFI's approach, highlighting how pooled catalytic capital, curated deployment, and ecosystem building can support scalable and replicable impact.

3. Short Reflections from SIFI Partners

The discussion was grounded by short reflections from SIFI partners:

- **Christian Leitz**, Chief Sustainability Officer at UBS, emphasised the importance of using catalytic capital to address the practical barriers that continue to hold impact investing back. Platforms like SIFI illustrate how pooling public and philanthropic capital can generate leverage at scale: for every dollar of early donor funding, additional catalytic capital can be mobilised, creating a larger risk-tolerant pool that is then able to attract private investment.
- **Marko Röder**, Head of Investment and Finance Solutions at the Ursimone Wietlisbach Foundation, further reflected on the importance of pooling philanthropic capital with state funding, highlighting how generous public capital can act as a catalyst for innovation. He also emphasised the need for capital to be deployed selectively, with strong standards of efficiency and transparency, so that pooled approaches remain clearly aligned with specific philanthropic mandates.

These reflections set the tone for a practical, solutions-oriented exchange.



4. Interactive Roundtable Discussion

Moderated by **Catherine Bukhal**, Partnership Lead at SIFI, the discussion focused on two guiding questions: what has genuinely worked in mobilising private finance through catalytic capital, and what constraints continue to limit scale.

Participants (listed below) shared concrete experiences showing how risk-tolerant capital can unlock private investment, while also highlighting persistent challenges such as pipeline readiness, transaction costs, misaligned incentives, and the difficulty of replicating successful pilots.

Pietro Lazzari – Head of Economic Cooperation and Development, Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

André Hoffmann – Vice-Chairman, Roche Holding

Christian Leitz – Chief Sustainability Officer, UBS

Gregory Renand – Head, Z Zurich Foundation

Leslie Johnston – CEO, Laudes Foundation

Ayesha Al Ateeqi – Executive Director, Mohamed bin Zayed Water Initiative (MBZWI)

Eckart von Hirschhausen – Founder, Stiftung Gesunde Erde - Gesunde Menschen

Jess Ayers – CEO, Quadrature Climate Foundation

Christine Sete-Lewis – Programme Manager, Private Sector Development, SECO

Shaun Seow – CEO, Temasek Philanthropy Asia Alliance (PAA)

Patrick Nussbaumer – Director, Climate and Environment, UBS Optimus Foundation

Anja Langenbucher – Director – Europe, Gates Foundation

Marko Röder – Head of Investment and Finance Solutions, Ursimone Wietlisbach Foundation

Ghaya Al Teneiji – Outreach Manager, Mohamed bin Zayed Water Initiative (MBZWI)

Manon Parmentier – Head of Crisis Response, Advocacy and Communication, Z Zurich Foundation

Masanori Kobayashi – Senior Research Fellow, Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF)

Josien Sluijs – Independent Executive President of the Board, SIFI



5. Key Takeaways

The session concluded with a shared recognition that philanthropic capital delivers its greatest value when used catalytically to shape markets, crowd in private finance, and support systemic change. Moving from isolated interventions to collective, platform-based approaches was identified as a key priority for the next phase of impact finance.

