

Tuesday August 30, 2022

Giant Blue Elephant unveiled on Dam Square in Amsterdam as a symbol of extreme wealth inequality in the Netherlands

Today Millionaires for Humanity and Human Act, together with Oxfam Novib, will reveal a giant blue elephant on Dam Square in Amsterdam to raise awareness and call on the government on the need for wealth taxes, as a solution to address inequality in the Netherlands.

Michiel Servaes, executive director Oxfam Novib: "For years now, we have been mentioning growing inequality in the world, but for too long it has been ignored and pretended it's not that bad in the Netherlands. However, the opposite is true: wealth inequality in the Netherlands is one of the highest in the world and the corona and energy crisis are not making things any better. Politics has caused this, through conscious choices and by looking away for a long time, but the good news is that politicians and our government have it within their power to tackle this inequality too. At least, if you're willing to see the elephant in the room. It's time we confront the government with the facts and demand fair tax policies in order to tackle inequality here and elsewhere in the world!"

The blue elephant stands for the fact that wealth, also in the Netherlands, is still not fairly taxed, despite the obvious need. Crisis after crisis we see the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. Extreme inequality undermines societies worldwide and perpetuates poverty. Inequality has also taken on extreme forms in the Netherlands. The 2,120 richest Dutch people together have more wealth than the 10.5 million poorest.

Speaking on behalf of the Millionaires for Humanity network, founder and millionaire **Djaffar Shalchi** said: “The elephant in the room is that governments have it within their power to address all the multiple challenges we are facing by taxing us rich people. But they choose not to do so and tax low-income and middle-income workers instead. Placing the burden on ordinary workers is unjust and missing a golden opportunity to raise the billions of dollars we need to tackle the challenges we face”.

Latest research from the Dutch government shows that the top 1% own more than a quarter of the total assets of Dutch households, while they experience a lower average tax burden than the rest of the households. This is the result of political choices. The current tax system offers too many opportunities for wealthy individuals to structure and shift money in order to pay less tax.

At the event on Dam Square, the Austrian millionaire heiress Marlene Engelhorn will also speak. She is spokesperson and co-founder of taxmenow. Taxmenow is an initiative of wealthy people who are actively committed to tax justice and higher taxes on wealth in German speaking Europe. She said: „The wealth of the so-called „top” one percent is not just a large number, it directly translates to power over politics, economics, the media and society. This power is out of proportion: in a democratic society solidarity concerns us all. Wealth distribution strikes at the heart of democracy. Redistributing wealth via a fair tax policy is really re-democratising power.”

The blue elephant will be displayed on Dam Square on the 30th of August from 12 PM to 5 PM. Speakers at the event are Sander Schimmelpenninck, Marlene Engelhorn, Tax policy expert Milou Geuns from Oxfam Novib and Vera Vrijmoeth from the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV). They will be speaking at 1 PM.

For further information

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Notes to editor

1. The top 1% own more than a quarter of the total assets and experience a lower average tax burden than the rest of the households in Dutch society, as published by the Dutch government in the report 'Licht uit, spot aan: de vermogensverdeling.' <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2022/07/08/ibo-vermogensverdeling-5-juli-2022>
2. The 2,120 richest Dutch people together have more wealth than the 10.5 million poorest, as published by Oxfam in January 2022 alongside the report Inequality Kills. <https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/persberichten/vermogen-tien-rijkste-mannen-verdubbeld-in-pandemie-160-miljoen-mensen-extra-in-armoede>
3. Oxfam Novib, which has been campaigning for years against inequality and fair taxes, is also launching a petition with this action asking for public support for the demand for the Dutch government to implement a fair tax policy and tax rules in order to tackle inequality both in the Netherlands and internationally.
4. Millionaires for Humanity is an initiative of Human Act Foundation. Human Act is based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Millionaires for Humanity is an international network of millionaires who campaign and advocate for their wealth, and the wealth of people like them, to be subject to a wealth tax. Members recognise the limitations of philanthropy and believe in the necessity of systemic change in the form of a progressive wealth tax to address inequality, fund the UN Sustainable Development Goals, fund the response to COVID-19, and address the climate crisis.
5. taxmenow - Initiative für Steuergerechtigkeit e.V. is an initiative of wealthy people that actively campaigns for tax justice in the German speaking countries. The work of taxmenow focuses on initiating changes in the tax system and thus structural change for the system as a whole. For this purpose, their members use their privileged access to the leading media.
6. Djaffar Shalchi is the founder of Human Act, and a real estate entrepreneur in Denmark. Will be present at the event.
7. Marlene Engelhorn is Austrian and an heiress to a multi-million inheritance. She has pledged to give away 90% of her inheritance. Will be present and speak at the event.
8. **Find more photos here:** website

Overview

When: August 30th 2022 at 12 PM to 5 PM.

Where: Dam Square, Amsterdam

What: a 5m wide, 5m tall and 7m long blue inflatable elephant will be installed to create awareness about the elephant in the room; wealth taxes.

Program: Speakers from 1 PM – 2 PM

Sander Schimmelpenninck,

Marlene Engelhorn, member of taxmenow and Millionaires for Humanity

Milou Geuns, Oxfam Novib

Vera Vrijmoeth, FNV