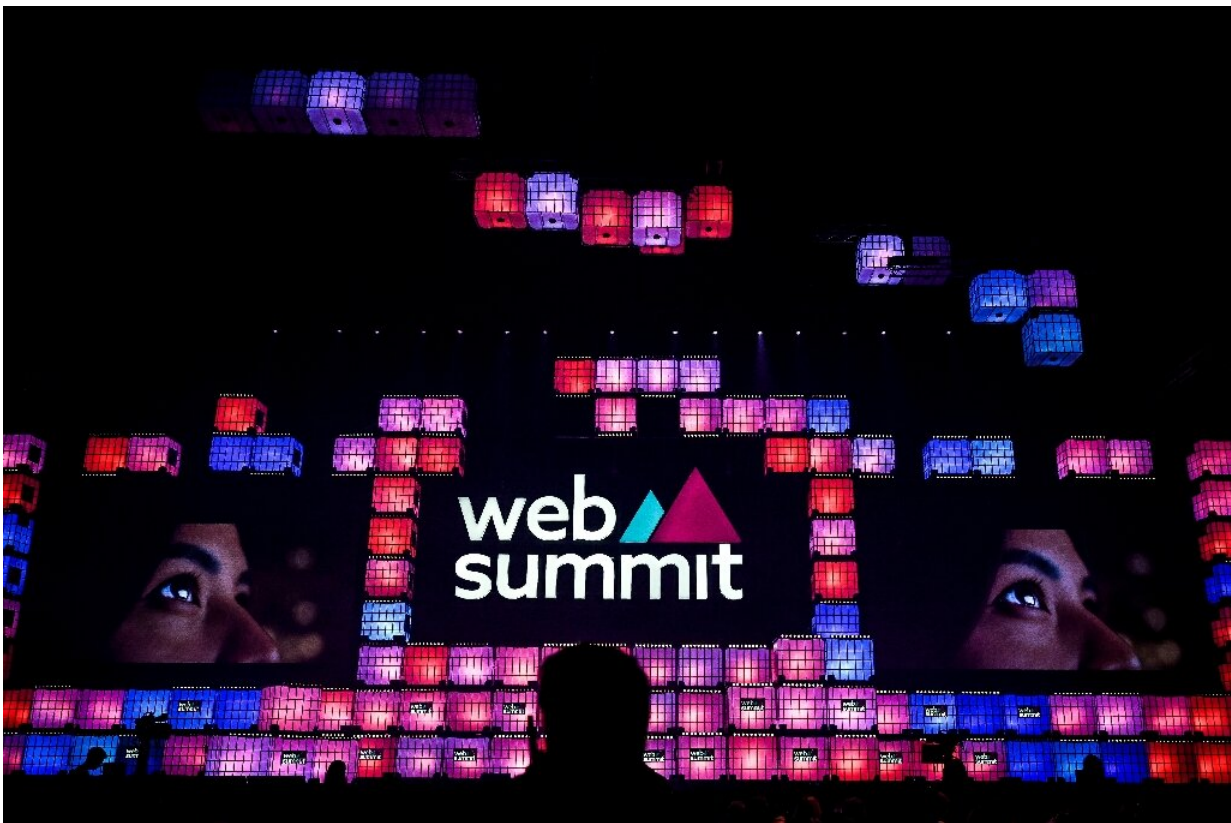


Tech summit to hear Uber whistleblower testimony

November 2 2022, by Joseph BOYLE



The Web Summit comes at a time when the tech industry as a whole faces huge challenges.

A lobbyist who leaked thousands of compromising documents on Uber will on Wednesday detail his efforts to bring change to one of the

world's leading companies at an annual tech summit in Lisbon.

Revelations in July from Mark MacGann, who led Uber's lobbying efforts in Europe between 2014 and 2016, led to widespread accusations that the ride-hailing app had broken the law—allegations the firm denied.

Reports based on his leaks alleged the company had obstructed justice and sent drivers to protests without concern for their safety, though Uber denied this and said the accusations were outdated.

MacGann will appear on the first full day of the Web Summit, an annual tech conference that kicked off on Tuesday night with a plea from Ukraine's first lady for IT workers to use their skills to save lives rather than end them.

"Some IT specialists in Russia have made their choice to be aggressors and murderers," said Olena Zelenska, urging attendees to make the opposite choice.

The Web Summit brings together start-ups, investors, [business leaders](#) and agenda-broadening speakers -- linguist Noam Chomsky and heavyweight boxing champion Oleksandr Usyk are among this year's line-up.

Organisers said all 70,000 tickets had been sold for the first full-scale edition since coronavirus restrictions halted in-person gatherings in 2020.

Although most major tech firms are represented, the most senior Silicon Valley figures rarely appear at such events any more.



Olena Zelenska told attendees that Russia 'puts technology at the service of terror'

Some attendees were happy with the lower-key approach at a conference that has previously seen the likes of Elon Musk show up.

"These conferences were getting too big, it was getting harder to find interesting things," said attendee Gabriele Lemmle from Munich, adding that she was happier to focus on [start-ups](#) with fresh ideas.

100 years of Twitter

During the opening ceremony on Tuesday, Chanpeng Zhao, the boss of

cryptocurrency firm Binance, was given centre stage and faced questions about the future of a sector that is still suffering a massive slump.

He told the audience it was part of an economic cycle and argued that cryptocurrencies were in fact the most stable assets right now.

Zhao also faced questions about his decision to back Musk's takeover of Twitter to the tune of \$500 million, telling the audience he was committed to the deal for the long haul.

"We anticipate to be involved for the next 10, 50, 100 years," he said, adding that Musk's guidance would make the platform much stronger in the decades to come.

The Web Summit comes at a time when the [tech industry](#) as a whole faces huge difficulties.



Organisers said all 70,000 tickets had been sold and there would be more than 1,000 speakers.

Firms are being roiled by supply chain problems, trade disputes between the US and China, plunging profits and creaky business models, and a wider economic slump that has sent investors and consumers fleeing.

Event organiser Paddy Cosgrave is keen to show that the event does not shy away from those issues, highlighting the platform it gives to critics and whistleblowers.

MacGann's appearance this year follows last year's turn by Frances Haughen, who laid out allegations that Facebook prioritised engagement over the mental wellbeing of young people.

Facebook's Nick Clegg then made an appearance to deny the allegations.

However, the opening salvoes of this year's summit have stuck resolutely to the idea of technology as a force for positive change.

"Tech is not a panacea, but it can help to solve the problems that are in front of us," Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa told the opening ceremony, urging a focus on climate change.

The organisers say more than 1,000 speakers will take part in the event, which runs until Friday, giving talks on subjects from cybersecurity to artificial intelligence.

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