PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Secretary-General calls for individual action to combat misinformation

People around the world urged to #PledgetoPause before sharing online

20 October 2020 — United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres will launch a groundbreaking global online action tomorrow (21 October), calling on people around the world to #PledgetoPause before they share content online. The activation is part of a wider behavior change campaign that aims to create a new social media norm to help combat the rising impact of viral misinformation.

In a video recording for the campaign, to be released on his Twitter and Instagram accounts and designed to be replicated by other leaders, influencers and concerned citizens, Mr. Guterres, who will begin his message with a five-second pause, says "During the COVID-19 pandemic, the wrong information can be deadly. Take the pledge to pause and help stop the spread of misinformation."

The Pause campaign is part of Verified, an United Nations initiative launched in May 2020 to communicate accessible science-backed health information in compelling formats and share stories of global solidarity around COVID-19. Pause is the first global behaviour change campaign on misinformation to mobilize experts and researchers, governments, influencers, civil society, businesses, regulators and the media under a single message - #PledgetoPause.

The campaign, which is based on research that indicates that a brief pause significantly lessens the inclination to share shocking or emotive material thereby slowing the spread of misinformation, aims to increase media literacy to enable social media users to spot misinformation and stopping themselves from passing it on.

The Pause campaign aims to reach a global audience of 1 billion globally, online and through partnerships, by the end of December. On October 21, throughout the day, online influencers and global voices will make their own #PledgetoPause and call on their supporters to do the same.

"COVID-19 is not just a health crisis, but a communications emergency as well. When misinformation spreads, the public loses trust and too often makes decisions that hamper the public response and even their own lives," said Melissa Fleming, UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications. "It is increasingly clear that we cannot successfully tackle the pandemic without also addressing online misinformation. Each and every one of us can help break the chain of misinformation by pausing before we share."

Ms. Fleming noted that individual steps alone will not suppress misinformation. The organization is working with social media platforms to recommend changes, and has recognized some notable steps to flag or block misinformation and elevate science-based content.

It has also warned that the amplification of inaccurate or harmful information and ideas on social media exacerbates some of the most pressing issues of our time. It foments hate and enables oppressive regimes, twists elections, skews understanding of challenges like climate change, undermines trust in institutions and exposes children and the vulnerable to dangerous ideas or people.

Civil society collaborators supporting Pause include organizations committed to tackling misinformation from around the world including Chequeado, Newschecker.in and First Draft, while African media organizations such as MultiChoice, and Yuvaa are helping to distribute Pause messaging.

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Editors Notes

Share Verified *is a campaign launched in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Designed in collaboration with the United Nations and other civil society groups, media broadcasters, activists and companies, its purpose is to provide content that cuts through the noise to deliver life-saving information, fact-based advice and stories from the best of humanity. For more information, please visit* takecarebeforeyoushare.org *and* shareverified.com/en