

**Comments to the 1st Informal Thematic Session of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**

**Geneva, 9 May 2017**

The big idea behind the Stop Funding Hate campaign is the concept of ethical advertising - the idea that advertising is, and should be, a Business and Human Rights issue.

If a newspaper is publishing stories that demonise migrants and fuel xenophobia, then the advertisers who fund that newspaper have to take some responsibility.

And if we want to tackle xenophobia effectively then we have to talk to advertisers and encourage them to switch their advertising away from publications that demonise migrants - and towards those outlets that behave responsibly and fairly.

The Stop Funding Hate campaign started in August last year but we already have tens of thousands of supporters in the UK and over 200,000 followers on Facebook. Our campaign videos have been shared hundreds of thousands of times on social media and been seen by millions of people.

We think that the reason we’ve seen this huge response is that a great many people in the UK are deeply concerned about the rise in xenophobia (and the role of the UK media in that problem) and are looking for constructive things they can do as individuals to push back. Also that this is an approach that people can see cuts the heart of the problem.

We know that if enough of us use our voice as consumers, then companies will start to respond.

The campaign’s first big success was in November last year, when the global toy brand Lego agreed to end its promotional partnership with the Daily Mail - a newspaper that is notorious for its demonisation of migrants and has been called out by the UNHCR over its coverage.

In recent months we’ve heard from a number of other companies who have told us that they have switched their advertising as a result of the campaign.

And it’s not only in the UK - in the United States almost 2,000 advertisers have stopped their promotions with a notorious website called Breitbart following a consumer campaign organised by another very new group called Sleeping Giants.

There are now Sleeping Giants chapters in many other countries around the world, including here in Switzerland.

There is a growing global movement of ordinary citizens working together to push back against the rise in xenophobia and racism by using their power as consumers. Stop Funding Hate is a part of that movement.

So we think that this shows that ethical advertising is an idea whose time has come. And we think that it’s an idea that - if applied on a large enough scale - could really help to tackle this demonisation of migrants within the media.

Because we know that part of the reason that these hateful stories are getting published is that hate is part of the business model.

This drip-drip of front page stories, demonising migrants, is clearly very divisive. But it can also be a very effective way for a newspaper to boost its sales. And this in turn boosts its advertising revenue.

So if we want to change this we have to find a way to make hate unprofitable.

We need to reach a critical mass of big companies who will publicly commit to advertising ethically - to make it part of their corporate social responsibility policy that they will not advertise in publications that incite hatred.

**Recommendations**

\*UN Member States can lead by example by publicly committing to the principle of ethical advertising - and ensuring that any government advertising campaigns are not channelled through media that have a track record of inciting hatred.

\*We would also encourage United Nations agencies and large NGOs to do the same for any advertising that they have

\*But obviously the private sector is where most advertising happens - so we think it’s critical for all stakeholders to find ways of engaging constructively with the private sector on this issue.

The more voices there are supporting ethical advertising, the easier it will be for businesses to come on board.

\*We would recommend that the new Global Compact includes, within its strategy for tackling xenophobia, guidelines for business on ethical advertising.

\*In the briefing document for today’s session, there is a list of commitments that member states could make within the Global Compact. Point number 7 envisages “establishing partnerships with political leaders and parties, media, private sector… and other public actors, to promote tolerance and respect for migrants... [and conducting] targeted awareness campaigns… to combat prejudice”. We would see a really important role for ethical advertising policies within that approach, because it’s a way of tackling the problem at its source.

Awareness campaigns are important, but so long as it remains profitable for media to publish these xenophobic stories, it’s going to be an uphill struggle. So any strategy for combating media xenophobia has to include measures for cancelling out the financial incentives that are driving this hostile media coverage. Ethical advertising could help to make hate - and xenophobia - unprofitable.

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