



United Nations

PRESS RELEASE

UNITED NATIONS LAUNCHES GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO COMBAT MISINFORMATION

(EMBARGOED, 12 noon, EST)

NEW YORK, 21 MAY 2020—Today the United Nations is launching ‘Verified’, an initiative to combat the growing scourge of COVID-19 misinformation by increasing the volume and reach of trusted, accurate information.

“We cannot cede our virtual spaces to those who traffic in lies, fear and hate,” said UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, who announced the initiative. “Misinformation spreads online, in messaging apps and person to person. Its creators use savvy production and distribution methods. To counter it, scientists and institutions like the United Nations need to reach people with accurate information they can trust.”

Verified, led by the UN Department for Global Communications (DGC), will provide information around three themes: science – to save lives; solidarity – to promote local and global cooperation; and solutions – to advocate for support to impacted populations. It will also promote recovery packages that tackle the climate crisis and address the root causes of poverty, inequality and hunger.

The initiative is calling on people around the world to sign up to become “information volunteers” to share trusted content to keep their families and communities safe and connected. Described as digital first responders, the volunteers will receive a daily feed of verified content optimized for social sharing with simple, compelling messaging that either directly counters misinformation or fills an information void.

DGC will partner with UN agencies and UN country teams, influencers, civil society, business and media organizations to distribute trusted, accurate content and work with social media platforms to root out hate and harmful assertions about COVID-19.

“In many countries the misinformation surging across digital channels is impeding the public health response and stirring unrest. There are disturbing efforts to exploit the crisis to advance nativism or to target minority groups, which could worsen as the strain on societies grows and the economic and social fallout kicks in,” Melissa Fleming, UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, said. “The Verified initiative will also work to address this trend with hopeful content that celebrates local acts of humanity, the contributions of refugees and migrants, and makes the case for global cooperation.”

The initiative is a collaboration with Purpose, one of the world’s leading social mobilization organizations. It is supported by the IKEA Foundation and Luminate.

Patricia Atkinson, the IKEA Foundation’s Chief Programmes Officer, said: “The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented global health crisis. The IKEA Foundation is proud to be supporting Verified -- an initiative aiming to make sure everyone has access to the trusted science and advice they need to keep their family and loved ones safe.”

Nishant Lalwani, Managing Director of Luminate, added: “COVID-19 has provided a stark reminder that access to accurate, trusted information can be the difference between fear and resilience, division and unity, and even life and death. We are proud to be supporting Verified and its work to tackle the coronavirus ‘infodemic’ by rapidly spreading reliable, science-based information to protect people and communities around the world.”

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