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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **NEW MIT STUDY SAYS UNITED NATIONS PAUSE CAMPAIGN SLOWS SPREAD OF LIFE-THREATENING MISINFORMATION**

1 July 2021, New York — Through the course of a tumultuous year globally, the United Nations Verified initiative has worked to cut through the noise on social media -- teaming up with the finest minds in medical science and behavioural research to identify factors prolonging the pandemic.

A major part of that work is the UN's [Pause campaign](#), which encourages people to pause to check the validity of any information they share. Now, a new study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) says the Pause campaign can bring about the behavioural change needed to stop the spread of misinformation.

The MIT study, conducted in the UK and the US, found that the simple act of pausing to question the origin, credibility, relevance and accuracy of any information before sharing it on phones, computers and social media platforms, significantly reduced people's propensity to share misinformation. In the study, participants who saw Pause campaign content were notably less likely to share fake headlines.

"The monumental task of tackling misinformation belongs to all of us. It is about how we can come together to drive social change, shifting behavioural norms and tapping into people's sense of solidarity to keep each other safe," said Melissa Fleming, the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications.

"The MIT study shows that pausing before sharing is not only possible but also the responsible thing to do, especially in an age where it has become hard to separate the truth from the lies."

The Pause campaign, created in collaboration with Purpose, a social impact agency, is part of the wider [Verified](#) initiative launched by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in May 2020 to deliver trusted COVID-19-related medical and science information and advice, and stop the spread of misinformation. According to the [World Health Organization](#), in the first three months of 2020 alone, nearly 6,000 people were hospitalized because of COVID-19 misinformation.



The Pause campaign, which reached nearly 1 billion people in 2020, is redoubling its efforts to empower more people to share information responsibly. The new phase of the campaign asks the world to take the #PledgeToPause and flood the Internet with the pause symbol.

Guided by research, the campaign is built on the premise that by interrupting, even for a few seconds, the impulse to share something we see -- an urge often fuelled by emotions such as excitement, anger, sadness, elation, and even altruism -- we allow ourselves time to think more critically. Better judgement prevails and fewer bogus claims are circulated.

In the words of the UN Secretary-General: "During the COVID-19 pandemic, the wrong information can be deadly. Take the pledge to pause and help stop the spread of misinformation."

## **ABOUT VERIFIED**

Verified is a United Nations initiative, in collaboration with Purpose, that aims to empower people around the world with science-based information during the Covid-19 response. Working with UN agencies, influencers, civil society, businesses, and social media platforms, Verified creates and distributes trusted, accurate information and encourages consumers to change their media consumption practices to reduce and stop the spread of misinformation online. Website: <https://shareverified.com/en/>

## **ABOUT PAUSE CAMPAIGN**

Launched as a part of the UN Verified initiative, the Pause Campaign draws on research from psychologists, neuroscientists and behavioural scientists whose studies indicate that pausing to reflect before sharing can significantly help to reduce the spread of unverified and misleading information. The overall campaign, which was launched a year ago, challenges people to break the habit of sharing shocking or emotive content impulsively and without questioning its accuracy. Website: <https://pledgetopause.org>

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