



Tuesday, 18th October 2022

**Statement Concerning the “Unlocking Healthcare for All” Event Invitation by the IHEID
Alumni Department**

The Geneva Graduate Institute is an institution that prides itself on its guiding principles of equity, diversity, and internationalism. However, on October 14th 2022, the IHEID student body received communication about an upcoming event in collaboration with Cartier Philanthropy titled *Unlocking Healthcare for All*. Attached to this communication was an image of a mother and child taken by a photographer who recently travelled to Togo. This decontextualised and dehumanising image, which capitalises on and exploits the condition of this young woman and child, was not only disseminated through email to the IHEID community but also through the Alumni Department’s public Instagram page.

As an institution that aspires to progress the mission of equity, diversity, and internationalism, the Afrique Students’ Association (ASA) and Black Conversations (BC) express our deep disappointment in the IHEID Alumni Department and its decision to use its privileged platform to generate a post so deeply rooted in stereotypes and bigotry. This post identified African communities as impoverished and subservient to Western models of humanitarian aid and therefore reproduced one-dimensional asymmetries of power rooted in racism and violence. Equally disappointing was the way in which the IHEID Alumni Department chose to respond to widespread grievances and calls for accountability. When it was found relevant by multiple students to point out the problematic nature of marketing with such racially charged imagery, rather than apologising or taking ownership, the post was defended and explained. The justification, that the image would feature in the photographic exhibition taking place following *Unlocking Healthcare for All*, failed to privilege the post’s harmful impact and by extension the thoughts and experiences of the Institute’s African and Black students. Therefore, the IHEID Alumni Department’s response itself reproduced racially rooted asymmetries of power. This made us, as marginalised individuals of the IHEID community, feel dismissed and excluded.

We have high expectations of the Geneva Graduate Institute and the seriousness with which it strives for equity, diversity, and internationalism. Thus, we strongly condemn these actions and call upon the IHEID Alumni Department as well as the general IHEID community to do the same. Following this letter, we, the Afrique Students’ Association (ASA) and Black Conversations (BC) expect the Geneva Graduate Institute, specifically the IHEID Alumni Department, to firstly, send

out a community-wide public apology by Friday the 21st of October in the form of a letter, acknowledging the harm caused by their October 14th post. Secondly, we deeply urge the Geneva Graduate Institute and its collaborators to engage in intentional reflection on what it means to commit to diversity, equity, fairness and mutual respect.

The Afrique Students' Association (ASA) and Black Conversations (BC), send this statement with the aspiration for the Geneva Graduate Institute to grow into an equitable, diverse, and transnational environment which celebrates change and the opportunity for progress. We assert our right to study in an environment which is equitable, fair and respectful of its diverse student body.

Sincerely,

The Afrique Students' Association (ASA), Black Conversations (BC), and other concerned community members.
