



Mrs. Cecilia Wikström, MEP  
Committee on Petitions, Chair

Mrs. Adina-Ioana Vălean, MEP  
Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, Chair

European Parliament  
Brussels, Belgium

2 April 2019

Dear Chairs,

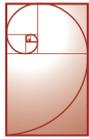
We write in follow up to your committees' joint hearing on "Climate Change Denial" on 21 March 2019. Thank you for your attention to this important issue and for inviting one of us (Dr. Geoffrey Supran) to testify as an expert witness. It was a privilege and a pleasure for him to do so.

During the hearing it came to light that ExxonMobil sent a letter to you both in your capacities as committee chairs on 20 March 2019. The letter alleges that our August 2017 [peer-reviewed study](#) in the journal *Environmental Research Letters*, "Assessing ExxonMobil's climate change communications (1977-2014)", which was a central theme of Geoffrey's testimony, is "inaccurate" and contains "fundamental errors." This is untrue. We are writing to you to correct the record and to respectfully take issue with how ExxonMobil was allowed to influence the hearing's proceedings.

ExxonMobil's approach to your hearing has been predictable and ironic, because it is a case in point of what Geoffrey described in his testimony: that this company – and the fossil fuel industry in general – have spent decades casting doubt on climate science, disparaging and defaming scientists, and undermining policy to protect profits. There are two key techniques in operation in this case:

- A. *Lobbying and corporate capture.* ExxonMobil refused to attend the European Parliament's hearing, choosing instead to try to discredit us – and thus influence Members – behind the scenes. Rather than speaking publicly and on-the-record, they operate in the shadows, misinforming decision makers in a way that offers little or no opportunity for scientists to correct the record. This type of behavior undermines the very purpose of the European Parliament's hearing. It also demonstrates that although ExxonMobil now claim to support climate action, they continue to misrepresent scientific work in order to protect profits and protect themselves from liability or responsibility.
- B. *Doubt-mongering and character assassination.* The company calls for a "neutral review of the facts," yet makes its case by citing a non-peer-reviewed report commissioned and paid for by ExxonMobil. The report had only one purpose: to undermine our reputations and thereby cast doubt on our findings. Moreover, scientific peer-review *is* neutral review. That is its *raison d'être*.

These tactics are precisely the sort of expert-for-hire doubt-mongering and character assassination that Naomi and Dr. Erik Conway documented in their [book](#) and [film](#) *Merchants of Doubt*, and which Geoffrey summarized in his testimony. Instead of subjecting their criticisms to established and time-honored forms of academic peer-review, as we (and all scientists) do, ExxonMobil paid an intellectual hit-person to engage in doubt mongering and *ad hominem* attacks that have never undergone objective, independent scrutiny, in order to falsely claim that our work has been refuted. They even claim that their expert-for-hire "developed" the content analysis method our study employs, which is also false: as her own report observes, content analysis "dat[es] to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century."



We fully stand by our conclusion that Exxon, Mobil, and ExxonMobil Corp. have all variously misled the public about climate science and its implications. Moreover, as Geoffrey noted in his testimony, our results do not stand in isolation – they are corroborated by numerous independent lines of scholarly and journalistic investigation.

Notice that despite ExxonMobil's deliberately confusing rhetoric, their letter does not challenge the overwhelming consensus of experts studying the history of fossil fuel interests, which is that fossil fuel companies and trade associations, including ExxonMobil, have (a) variously known about the reality and dangers of human-caused climate change for decades; and (b) knowingly spent decades orchestrating, funding, and perpetuating disinformation about climate change so as to delay action. ExxonMobil cannot challenge these observations, because they are verified by thousands of pages of documented evidence.

Therefore, ExxonMobil reverts to misleading the public about its history of misleading the public. This includes the straw man argument that they have never hidden or suppressed climate science research, even though no one is accusing them of doing so. What we do say – and show – is that they misled the public. On this point the company remains silent. It has become a familiar pattern. Scientists publish science, ExxonMobil responds with spin. We think that makes it clear who can be trusted – and who can't – when it comes to facts about the past and decisions about our future.

Because this is now well known, we were taken aback by the way in which ExxonMobil's letter was allowed to influence the hearing's proceedings. While we greatly appreciated your transparency in sharing the letter with committee members and in disclosing to the hearing that ExxonMobil had notified you of their decision to not attend, neither Geoffrey nor the public were provided with a copy of ExxonMobil's letter or made aware of its criticisms of our work. This lack of disclosure and forewarning were particularly serious because MEP Mr. Laurențiu Rebegea recited ExxonMobil's slanders to Geoffrey during the hearing's Q&A Session. We hope that you will agree that efforts by corporate interests and their parliamentary allies to undermine expert witness testimony – and to intimidate potential future expert witnesses – is an affront to your institution and demands serious attention.

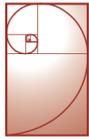
Specifically, we would appreciate your help in correcting the record by sharing this letter with your fellow committee members and by ensuring that it is part of the hearing's official record. We also ask that our observations be taken into account by European Parliament when deciding whether to revoke ExxonMobil's lobby badges, as has been formally [requested](#) by several MEPs; it is relevant to this decision that ExxonMobil's behavior surrounding your hearing epitomizes the very behavior that your hearing was convened to address.

We unreservedly applaud your leadership on climate change. You have taken an unprecedented first, successful step towards holding accountable those who have imperiled humanity by stalling action for decades, and we were honored to be part of it. It is in this spirit of support and encouragement that we hope you will receive this letter correcting the record and offering our constructive criticism. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can offer further assistance.

Sincerely,

Dr. Naomi Oreskes  
Professor of the History of Science  
Affiliated Professor of Earth & Planetary Sciences  
Harvard University

Dr. Geoffrey Supran  
Climate Change Solutions Fund  
Postdoctoral Fellow  
Harvard University



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