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Unilever is the brand most praised by NGOs in 2019, finds SIGWATCH

Nestlé is the brand most criticised

Unilever is the brand most praised by NGOs in 2019, on account of its leadership on a range of issues including deforestation, animal welfare and climate change. This is the third year in a row that the FMCG giant has earned first place in SIGWATCH's annual ranking of most praised corporates, based on the research and strategy consultancy's monitoring of more than 6,600 NGO campaigning actions worldwide in the past 12 months. The finance sector features prominently in the top ten, due to its action on carbon divestment, while firms taking animal welfare seriously also perform well. In contrast, the energy sector comes off badly, due to its continued dependency on fossil fuels. Companies deemed to be procrastinating on plastics also receive negative attention, with Nestlé the number one most criticised brand.

According to SIGWATCH's analysis, four insurers make it into the top ten on account of their pledges to divest from fossil fuels, which has been a key driver of NGO campaigning for some time. AXA of France (3rd), Allianz of Germany (4th) and Switzerland's Swiss Re (6th) earn top-ten status for the second consecutive year, while French reinsurer SCOR is a new entrant, moving up nine places to number 10.

The highest climber in the 2019 'most praised' rankings is VF Corporation, a leading apparel, footwear and accessories company which owns Vans, The North Face and Timberland. It is a new entrant at number eight, recognized for its fur-free stance and boycott on Brazilian leather amid concerns over deforestation. Other brands that feature in the top ten for heightened commitments to animal welfare include Nestlé in second place and Yum! Brands (5th) which owns Taco Bell, KFC, Pizza Hut, and WingStreet. Danone is in seventh place and Aldi, ninth place.

Although Nestlé is the second most praised company of 2019, it is also the most criticised by far. It receives almost five times as much disapproval as praise for failing, in the eyes of NGOs, to adequately tackle the issue of plastic packaging and for contributing to marine pollution. NGO favourite Unilever finds itself on the most criticised list for the same reason, in seventh place, as does Coca-Cola, at number nine. Leading energy firms are also in the bad books due to their continued allegiance to fossil fuels.

Commenting on the 2019 rankings, SIGWATCH founder and managing director Robert Blood said, “Climate change, plastics and animal welfare are the biggest drivers of campaigning activity, so brands that are strongly exposed in any of these areas will get a lot of positive attention if they act decisively, and a lot of negative attention if they can’t or won’t. Meanwhile so-called changemakers such as Unilever and Nestlé which NGOs expect to lead their industries are praised to reward them for change and criticised to spur them to further action.

“In 2020 we expect activist groups to ramp up their campaigning against fossil fuels and expand their climate attacks to other sectors. We are seeing this already with the launch of a new “Stop the Money” campaign aimed at Wall Street banks and top insurers, and with climate activists’ calls for business leaders attending this year’s World Economic Forum to end their support for fossil fuels. It will be interesting to see if NGOs are able to replicate the success they have had in securing commitments from banks and insurers on coal, to now seriously exit oil and gas.”

About the annual rankings

SIGWATCH has been compiling annual rankings of brands most praised and most criticised by NGOs for the last ten years. The rankings are based on its monitoring of almost 10,000 NGOs and their campaign actions over the previous 12 months.

BRANDS MOST PRAISED BY ACTIVIST GROUPS IN 2019

1. Unilever
2. Nestlé
3. AXA
4. Allianz
5. Yum! Brands
6. Swiss Re
7. Danone
8. VF Corporation
9. Aldi
10. SCOR SE

BRANDS MOST CRITICISED BY ACTIVIST GROUPS IN 2019

1. Nestlé
2. Royal Dutch Shell
3. World Bank Group
4. Adani Group
5. ExxonMobil
6. Total S.A.
7. Unilever
8. Carnival Corporation
9. Coca-Cola Company
10. Sinar Mas Group

About SIGWATCH

SIGWATCH is a global research and strategy consultancy specializing in understanding NGOs (activist groups) and the impact of their campaigns on corporate reputation and social responsibility. It is headquartered in London, United Kingdom with a support office in Germany and a global network of researchers and analysts. It also has partners in the US and Canada.

SIGWATCH provides real-time monitoring and measurement of emerging stakeholder risk from more than 9,000 NGO campaigners across all industry sectors. Its clients are mostly global businesses that have direct or sector exposure to issues campaigns, and companies that advise or invest in such businesses or need to carry out due diligence prior to partnering or investment.

www.sigwatch.com

For a copy of our 2019 'most praised' ranking graphic or to speak to a SIGWATCH expert, contact:

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