

Brussels 10 October 2018,

Dear Bono,

Ever since ‘I will follow’ became a first success in the Netherlands in 1982, I admire your music. And I very much appreciate your work of ONE.org. However, the news on your tax constructions rattled me. It risks to undermine all your achievements and will just reinforce the idea that paying taxes is for the dumb.

The Paradise Papers showed it very clearly: you can dodge taxes, if you can afford to do so. So therefore, local companies and hardworking middle class people were not on the list. Queen Elizabeth and Lewis Hamilton were.

And so were you. Not only are you the ‘tax avoidance neighbour’ of the Rolling Stones, with a letter box in Amsterdam, it also turns out that you have shares in a Lithuanian company that artificially lowers its tax bills. These are practices that qualify as aggressive tax planning.

Tax avoidance deprives the world of billions. The economist Gabriel Zucman has calculated that national treasuries miss out 200 billion of taxing revenue. The burden is carried mostly by developing countries, the very countries that you try to support through your NGO!

The core of the problem is political unwillingness. Unwillingness to fix a broken tax system, a system that makes the world less equal. And although I realise you did not invent the system, you can be a part in fixing it. By speaking out against unfair taxation and letting your tax advisers act accordingly.

More than most, you will understand that a change requires a coalition. The good news is, here in the European Parliament this coalition is in full swing. 104.450 European citizens have demanded fair taxation via a petition. The European Parliament has adopted rules against tax paradise and profit shifting.

We are not there yet. But every voice counts. So I ask you: do not let your tax compliance cast a shadow over your legacy. Stand up against a system that produces the inequality you fight.

Let’s be one with the coalition against tax avoidance.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Tang