

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
FORT LAUDERDALE DIVISION

GRISEL ALONSO, as Receiver for
Elm Tree Investment Advisors, LLC,
Elm Tree Investment Fund, LP,
Elm Tree 'e'Conomy Fund, LP, and
Elm Tree Motion Opportunity, LP,

Case No. 16-62603-CIV-DIMITROULEAS
Proceeding Ancillary to
No. 15-CV-60082-Dimitrouleas/Snow

Plaintiff,

v.

JAMES BENVENUTO, an individual,
NGU INVESTORS, LLC, a Florida limited
liability company; JEAN BENVENUTO, an
individual, SURJIT WALIA, an individual,
S.W. EQUITIES CORP., a New York corporation,
TIMOTHY HARTMANN, an individual,
ALEXANDER BUKHSHTABER, an individual,
MVS MEDIA GROUP, LLC, a Florida limited
liability company, HARRY TAWIL, an individual,
EDUARDO DOS SANTOS, an individual,
FILOMENA CALABRIA, an individual,
JOSE ROFFE, an individual, MIREILLE ROFFE,
an individual, SOMESWARI NUKALA, an individual,
Yael TAPIERO, an individual, LAAS W. TURNBULL,
an individual, OMRI TINTPULVER, an individual,
CONSTANTINO DOS SANTOS, an individual,
ARMAND DELMAR, an individual, AHMAD NAQVI,
an individual, MERCEDES ELMALEH, an individual,
ELIA BLUMIN, an individual, TED GREENWALD,
an individual, ALINA TALSKY, an individual,
ELVIS PERVAN, an individual,
ANGELO ISMIRNIOGLOU, an individual, and
JONATHAN VERK, an individual.

Defendants.

**JOINT MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT
WITH DEFENDANTS ALEX BUKHSHTABER AND MVS MEDIA GROUP LLC**

Grisel Alonso, not individually but solely in her capacity as the Receiver appointed over
Elm Tree Investment Advisors, LLC, Elm Tree Investment Fund, LP, Elm Tree 'e'Conomy Fund,

LP, and Elm Tree Motion Opportunity, LP, and Etopia LP (the "Receivership Entities") along with Defendants Alex Bukhshtaber ("Bukhshtaber") and MVS Media Group LLC ("MVS") (together, the "Defendants"), respectfully submit this Motion for Approval of Settlement Agreement. *The Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") does not object to the relief sought herein.*

INTRODUCTION

The Receiver has determined, based upon the bank records of the Receivership Entities and records produced in discovery, that Defendants received a total of \$57,600.00 from the Receivership Entities between April 2014 and January 2015. According to the bank records of the Receivership Entities, the funds that Defendants received were derived from investors in the Receivership Entities. Based on the foregoing, it is the Receiver's position that Defendants are "net winners" in Defendant Frederic Elm's investment scheme, as outlined in the SEC's Complaint and Emergency Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Other Relief in *SEC v. Elm, et al.*, United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida, Case No. 15-cv-60082 (the "SEC Action"). [See SEC Action at D.E. 1, D.E. 4].

Further, it is the Receiver's position that the "profits" Defendants received are subject to return to the Receivership Estate as fraudulent transfers. The Receiver named Defendants in the above-styled action as a result.

Defendants deny these allegations.

In order to avoid the expense and risk of litigation, the Receiver and Defendants have agreed to resolve any and all disputes relating to the transfers of funds that Defendants received pursuant to the terms of a proposed settlement agreement (the "Settlement Agreement") in which Defendants will pay a total of \$35,000.00 to the Receiver, \$3,900 of which is due within five (5)

days of the Court's approval of the Settlement Agreement, and the remainder of which is required to be paid in eight (8) monthly installments of \$3,887.50. The Receiver files this Motion because the Receivership Order requires Court approval of all proposed settlements. [SEC Action, D.E. 13 at ¶ 6].

THE RECEIVERSHIP ORDER

On January 16, 2015, the Court entered an order appointing Ms. Alonso as the Receiver (the "Receivership Order"). [SEC Action, D.E. 13]. The Receivership Order provides, among other things, that the assets and property of the Receivership Entities, whatsoever and wherever located, are to be placed in the Receiver's control [*Id.* at ¶ 1] and the Receiver has sole title to the assets and property, including but not limited to all books, papers, codes, records, data, bank accounts, savings accounts, securities, supplies, equipment, and other real property [*Id.* at ¶¶ 1, 17].

The Receivership Order also gives the Receiver power to:

Defend, compromise or settle legal actions, including the instant proceeding in which ETIA and the Elm Tree Funds or the Receiver are a party, commenced either prior to or subsequent to this Order, **with authorization of this Court** . . .

[*Id.* at ¶ 6] (emphasis added).

The Receivership Order further provides:

In the event the Receiver discovers that funds of persons who have invested in the Elm Tree Funds have been transferred to other persons or entities, the Receiver shall apply to this Court for an Order giving the Receiver possession of such funds and, if the Receiver deems it advisable, extending this receivership over any person or entity holding such investor funds;

[*Id.* at ¶ 24].

THE TRANSFERS

The Receiver contends that from April 2014 to January 2015, Defendants received the following transfers of funds in the total amount of \$57,600.00 from the Receivership Entities: (i) \$15,000 to Bukhshtaber on April 9, 2014; (ii) \$16,000.00 to MVS on August 1, 2014; and (iii) \$26,600 for Bukhshtaber's benefit between December 2, 2013 and January 2, 2015 (collectively, the "Transfers"). The Receiver contends that the records of the Receivership Entities demonstrate that the funds Defendants received were derived from persons who invested in the Receivership Entities. Accordingly, it is the Receiver's position that Defendants received fraudulent transfers in the amount of \$57,600.00, which funds rightfully belong to the Receivership Estate. The Defendants deny these allegations.

THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

The terms of the proposed Settlement Agreement are as follows:

- Defendants shall pay \$35,000.00 to the Receiver as follows:
 - \$3,900.00 within five (5) days of the Court's approval of the Settlement Agreement; and
 - Thereafter, eight (8) equal monthly installments, of \$3,887.50, due on the fifth day of each month for the next eight (8) months.
- In the event Defendants fail to timely make payment pursuant to the Settlement Agreement, or if any payment made by Defendants pursuant to the terms of the Settlement Agreement is not made with good and sufficient funds, the Receiver shall provide Defendants with ten (10) business days written notice of default. During this ten (10) business day period, Defendants shall have the opportunity to cure such default (the "Cure Period"). If Defendants fail to cure the default within

the Cure Period, then the Receiver may pursue all appropriate amounts owed to the Receivership Estate without any limitation based on the Settlement Amount set forth in paragraph 2 of this Agreement

- The Receiver and Defendants agree to mutual releases relating to the Transfers upon the Court's approval of the Settlement Agreement and the Receiver's receipt of the full Settlement Amount due under the terms of the Settlement Agreement.

A copy of the proposed Settlement Agreement is attached as **Exhibit A**.

JURISDICTION

The Receiver and Defendants request that the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida retain jurisdiction to enforce the terms of the Settlement Agreement and decide any other issues arising from the Settlement Agreement. The Receiver and Defendants agree that in the event an enforcement action or any other litigation arises from the Settlement Agreement, the prevailing party in that action will be entitled to an award of its attorneys' fees and costs.

BEST INTERESTS OF THE RECEIVERSHIP ESTATE

The Receiver respectfully submits that the Court should approve the proposed Settlement Agreement because it is in the best interest of the Receivership Estate. The process of reaching the proposed settlement was fair, well-informed, and well-advised by the Receiver's retained professionals.

The ultimate inquiry in assessing a proposed receivership settlement is whether "the proposed settlement is fair." *Sterling v. Stewart*, 158 F. 3d 1199, 1203 (11th Cir. 1998); *see In re Consol. Pinnacle West Sec. Litig./Resolution Trust Corp.-Merabank Litig.*, 51 F. 3d 194, 196-97 (9th Cir. 1995) ("We see no reason to upset the court's conclusion that the settlement process

and result were fair.”). Determining the fairness of [a] settlement is left to the sound discretion of the trial court.” *Sterling*, 158 F. 3d at 1202 (11th Cir. 1998). In determining fairness, the Court should examine the following broad array of factors: (1) the likelihood of success on the merits; (2) the range of possible discovery; (3) the point on or below the range of discovery at which settlement is fair, adequate and reasonable; (4) the complexity, expense and duration of litigation; (5) the substance and amount of opposition to the settlement; and (6) the stage of proceedings at which the settlement was achieved. *Sterling*, 158 F. 3d at 1204. *See also SEC v. Princeton Economic Int’l*, 2002 WL 206990, *2 (S.D.N.Y. 2002) (receivership court should consider “various factors including, inter alia: (1) the probable validity of the claim; (2) the apparent difficulties attending its enforcement through the courts; (3) the collectability of the judgment thereafter; (4) the delay and expenses of the litigation to be incurred; and (5) the amount involved in the compromise”).

For example, the District Court in *Gordon v. Dadante* “analyze[d] the settlement as a whole, under the totality of the circumstances.” 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 32281, *39, 48 (N.D. Ohio April 18, 2008). The Sixth Circuit affirmed, finding that the district court had fulfilled its responsibilities by engaging in an “independent analysis of the settlement,” as “the district court had extensive knowledge of the claims involved in the case, the valuation of those claims, and the nature of the settlement,” and thus “had more than sufficient information to assess the fairness of the settlement proposed.” 2009 U.S. App. LEXIS 15517 at **16, 23. As the district court noted in a later approval proceeding, “the courts must recognize that plans relating to settlement of a receivership are inherently imperfect, “because no proposal can be [perfect],” and the “task at hand, however, is to do justice to the extent possible.” *Gordon v. Dadante*, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1979, *13-14 (N.D. Ohio Jan. 11, 2010).

Here, the Receiver respectfully submits that the Settlement Agreement is a fair, adequate, and reasonable resolution of the Receiver's causes of action against Defendants. The Receiver, considering the delays and high costs of litigation, believes that the outcome for the Receivership Entities and investors will be better under the Settlement Agreement than it would be if there is protracted litigation.

Based on the Receiver's due diligence, the terms of the proposed Settlement Agreement are fair and reasonable, representing a sensible means of assuring a beneficial outcome for the investors.

OBJECTION PROCEDURE

As noted above, the determination of the fairness of a settlement is left to the sound discretion of the trial court. *See Sterling*, 158 F. 3d at 1202. While "the substance and amount of opposition to the settlement" is a factor for the Court's consideration pursuant to the *Sterling* test, the Receiver respectfully requests that the Court, in exercising its broad discretion, approve the Settlement Agreement with limited or no objection procedure.

It is the Receiver's position that given the amount at stake in this action, an expensive, elongated objection procedure would render the benefits of the settlement worthless to the Receivership Estate, and thus no objection procedure should be permitted.

CONCLUSION

The Receiver and Defendants jointly and respectfully request entry of an order approving the Settlement Agreement, and granting any further relief the Court deems just and proper.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on March 20, 2017, a true and correct copy of the foregoing was served via electronic transmission on all counsel or parties of record, including Sherryl Martens Dunaj, sdunaj@miami-law.net.

<p>BROAD AND CASSEL LLP Attorneys for Receiver One Biscayne Tower, 21st Floor 2 S. Biscayne Boulevard Miami, FL 33131 Telephone: (305) 373-9467 Facsimile: (305) 995-6387</p> <p>By: <u>s/Daniel S. Newman</u> Daniel S. Newman, P.A. Florida Bar No. 0962767 dnewman@broadandcassel.com Christopher Cavallo, Esq. Florida Bar No. 0092305 ccavallo@broadandcassel.com</p>	<p>SIMON, SCHINDLER & SANDBERG, LLP 2650 Biscayne Blvd. Miami, FL 33137 Tel.: (305) 576-1300 Fax: (305) 576-1331</p> <p>By: <u>s/ Sherryll Martens Dunaj</u> Sherryll Martens Dunaj Florida Bar No. 136707 sdunaj@miami-law.net</p>
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EXHIBIT "A"

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT AND RELEASE

THIS SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT (referred to herein as the “Agreement”) is entered into this ____ day of March 2017, by and between Grisel Alonso, not individually, but solely in her capacity as the Court-appointed receiver (“Receiver”) for Elm Tree Investment Advisors, LLC, Elm Tree Investment Fund LP, Elm Tree "e"Conomy Fund LP, Elm Tree Motion Opportunity LP, and Etopia L.P. (collectively, the “Receivership Entities”), and Alex Bukhshtaber (“AB”) and MVS Media Group LLC (“MVS”) (AB and MVS collectively referred to as "Defendants"). The Receiver and Defendants are collectively referred to as the "Parties."

WHEREAS, between April 9,2014 and January 5, 2015, Receiver has alleged that AB received transfers of funds in the total amount of \$41,600 from Receivership Entities (the “AB Transfers”);

WHEREAS, on August 1, 2014, Receiver has alleged that MVS received a transfer of funds in the amount of \$16,000 from a Receivership Entity (the “MVS Transfers”) (collectively, with the AB Transfers, the “Transfers”);

WHEREAS, based upon the amount of the Transfers, Defendants are alleged to have received a total of \$57,600 in Transfers;

WHEREAS, Defendants deny that the Transfers were received without consideration for value and deny that the Transfers were “fraudulent” under Florida Statutes §726.105-106 or that Defendants were unjustly enriched thereby, and that accordingly a factual and legal dispute has arisen between the Receiver and Defendants concerning the Transfers, and that without admission of liability Defendants nonetheless wish to resolve the Receiver’s claims regarding the Transfers in order to avoid incurring attorneys’ fees defending the Receiver’s lawsuit referenced below;

WHEREAS, on November 15, 2016, the Receiver filed suit against Defendants, among others, in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida, Case No. 16-cv-62603, with respect to the Transfers (the “Clawback Action”);

WHEREAS, to avoid the expense and risk of litigation, the Parties hereto are desirous of resolving all disputes relating to the Transfers;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the premises and mutual promises and covenants contained herein, the Parties agree as follows:

1. **Settlement.** The Parties hereby settle and compromise all claims, disputes, and controversies between them for damages, attorneys’ fees, costs, equitable relief, and/or punitive damages related to the Transfers made by one or more of the Receivership Entities and Defendants, which the Receiver has or may have had against Defendants, or which Defendants have or may have had against the Receiver.

2. **Settlement Terms.** In consideration and exchange for the settlement and releases contained herein, Defendants shall pay \$35,000.00 (the "Settlement Amount") to the Receiver in installments as follows:
 - a. Defendants shall pay \$3,900 to the Receiver within five (5) days of the date that this Agreement is approved by the Court;
 - b. Defendants shall pay the remaining \$31,100 of the Settlement Amount to the Receiver in eight (8) equal monthly installments of \$3,887.50, thereafter due on the fifth day of each month for the next eight (8) months. No interest shall accrue or be charged by the Receiver upon the deferred installment payments.
3. **Payment Information.** Defendants shall deliver to the Receiver all 8 installment payment checks provided for in paragraph 2.b, with each check post-dated as of the 5th day of the month. Receiver agrees to hold in escrow the post-dated checks, depositing one for each month in which one of the installment payments is due. Said checks will not be funded by Defendants until on or before the date on which each installment is due and accordingly shall not be deposited by the Receiver until the 5th day of each month of the 8 month installment payment period and no sooner. In no event shall Defendants be liable for any returned check fees or statutory sanctions for any checks returned for insufficient funds where the Receiver has deposited the same before the due date of the 5th day of each month of the installment period described in paragraph 2.b.
4. **Court Approval and Effective Date.** This Agreement is not effective unless and until it is approved by the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida. The Effective Date of this Agreement is defined as the date the Court enters an order approving the Agreement, if such approval is granted.
5. **Releases.**
 - a. Upon the approval of this Agreement by the Court and upon the Receiver's receipt and clearing of the entire Settlement Amount as set forth in paragraph 2 above, in consideration of the undertakings described above, but expressly excepting the rights and obligations created by this Agreement, the Receiver, on behalf of the Receivership Entities, releases and discharges Defendants from any and all claims, debts, liabilities, demands, obligations, costs, attorneys' fees, actions and causes of action related to or arising from the Transfers and any and all other transactions or transfers between Defendants and the Receivership Entities, made at any time. This is a general release of all claims made or which could have been made by Receiver and releases all claims of any sort arising from any transactions or transfers between Defendants any any Receivership Entity from the beginning of time to the date of this Agreement.
 - b. Upon the approval of this Agreement by the Court and upon the Receiver's receipt and clearing of the entire Settlement Amount as set forth in paragraph 2 above, Defendants release and discharge the Receiver and the Receivership

Entities from any and all claims, debts, liabilities, demands, obligations, costs, attorneys' fees, actions and causes of action related to or arising from the Transfers and any and all other transactions or transfers between Defendants and the Receivership Entities. This is a general release of all claims made or which could have been made by Defendants and releases all claims of any sort arising from any transactions or transfers between Defendants and any Receivership Entity and/or the Receiver from the beginning of time to the date of this Agreement.

6. **No Admissions.** This Agreement is expressly agreed to be in compromise of all disputes and disputed claims, and the Settlement Amount and/or the releases contained herein are not to be construed as admissions of liability, culpability, or wrongdoing on the part of the the Parties, which liability, culpability, or wrongdoing is expressly denied.
7. **Integration.** This Agreement contains the entire Agreement between the Parties, and the terms of this Agreement are contractual and not a mere recital. The Parties agree that all prior negotiations and understandings between them have been merged herein, and that this Agreement may not be modified or changed, except by a writing signed by a duly authorized representative of each party.
8. **Binding Nature.** The provisions of this Agreement shall be binding upon and inure to the benefit of the Parties hereto and their estates, heirs, legal representatives, successors and assigns. The Parties represent and acknowledge that they have had an opportunity to, and have consulted with, counsel in connection with the execution of this Agreement.
9. **Counterparts.** This Agreement may be executed in counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, and the counterparts shall together constitute one and the same agreement, notwithstanding that each party is not signatory to the original or the same counterpart. Facsimile signatures shall be deemed as effective as original signatures.
10. **Disputes.** Any dispute arising out of this Agreement or its terms shall be resolved exclusively through the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida, and Florida law shall govern. Defendants and Receiver submit to the jurisdiction of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida.
11. **Authority.** Each of the signatories hereto represents that she/he has authority to execute this Agreement and to bind the party or parties on whose behalf she/he has signed.
12. **Severability.** If any provision of this Agreement is determined to be invalid or unenforceable, the remainder of this Agreement shall not be affected thereby.
13. **Construction.** The Parties to this Agreement have negotiated at arms' length and participated in the drafting of this Agreement and, accordingly, any claimed

ambiguity shall not be presumptively resolved either in favor of or against any party hereto.

14. **Attorneys' Fees.** The Parties will bear their own expenses, costs and/or attorneys' fees, including any costs or attorneys' fees incurred in connection with the negotiation and execution of this Agreement. The Parties agree that in the event of any litigation to enforce this Agreement, the prevailing party shall be entitled to recover its reasonable attorneys' fees and costs from the non-prevailing party in any action (including but not limited to all paralegal fees in any trial, bankruptcy and/or appellate proceedings).
15. **Default.** In the event Defendants fail to timely make any of the nine (9) payments totaling the Settlement Amount in paragraph 2, the Receiver shall provide Defendants with ten (10) business days written notice of default. During this ten (10) business day period, Defendants shall have the opportunity to cure such default (the "Cure Period"). If Defendants fail to cure the default within the Cure Period, then the Receiver may pursue all appropriate amounts owed to the Receivership Estate without any limitation based on the Settlement Amount set forth in paragraph 2 of this Agreement. Said written notice shall be sent by Receiver to Defendants by U.S. Mail certified return receipt or Federal Express or hand delivery to Alex Bukhshtaber at 1800 South Ocean Drive, #2908, Hallandale, Florida 33009
16. **Jurisdiction.** The Parties agree to seek an Order providing that the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida shall retain jurisdiction to enforce the terms of this Agreement and decide any other issues arising from this Agreement. In the event no such order retaining jurisdiction over this Agreement is granted, the Parties agree that the sole venue for any action arising from the Agreement shall be in the District Court for the Southern District of Florida.
17. **Notices.** All notices to the Receiver shall be addressed to Daniel S. Newman, P.A., Broad and Cassel, 2 South Biscayne Boulevard, 21st Floor, Miami, Florida 33131 which shall constitute good and sufficient notice. All notices sent to Defendants shall be addressed to Alex Bukhshtaber and MVS Media Group LLC, 1800 South Ocean Drive, #2908, Hallandale, Florida 33009 (with a courtesy cc to Sherryll Martens Dunaj, Simon Schindler & Sandberg, 2650 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, Florida 33137), which shall constitute good and sufficient notice. While the foregoing provides for a copy of the Notice to be sent to counsel for Defendants, said copy of the Notice is a matter of courtesy only and does not constitute good and sufficient notice to Defendants. Electronic mail does not constitute Notice for purposes required by this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have affixed or caused to be affixed their respective signatures, effective on the day and year first written above.

GRISEL ALONSO, THE RECEIVER

By: _____
Name: Grisel Alonso
Title: Receiver
Date:

ALEX BUKHSHTABER

Date: _____

MVS MEDIA GROUP, LLC

By: _____
Name:
Title:
Date:

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
FORT LAUDERDALE DIVISION

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ELVIS PERVAN, an individual,
ANGELO ISMIRNIOGLOU, an individual, and
JONATHAN VERK, an individual.

Defendants.

**ORDER GRANTING RECEIVER'S MOTION TO APPROVE SETTLEMENT
AGREEMENT WITH ALEX BUKHSHTABER AND MVS MEDIA GROUP LLC**

THIS CAUSE is before the Court upon the Receiver's Motion for Approval of Settlement Agreement with Alex Bukhshtaber and MVS Media Group LLC [D.E. 46], filed herein on March 20, 2017. The Court has carefully considered the Motion, the Settlement

Agreement attached thereto [D.E. 46-1], notes that Defendants do not object to the relief sought by the Motion, and is otherwise fully advised in the premises.

Accordingly, it is hereby **ORDERED AND ADJUDGED** as follows:

1. The Receiver's Motion for Approval of Settlement Agreement with Alex Bukhshtaber and MVS Media Group LLC [D.E. 46] is hereby **GRANTED**.

2. The Settlement Agreement [D.E. 46-1] is hereby **APPROVED**.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers, Fort Lauderdale, Broward County, Florida this __
_____ day of March, 2017.

WILLIAM P. DIMITROULEAS
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

Copies furnished to:
Counsel of record