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The cocoa supply-chain reaffirms its commitment to improve farmers' livelihoods and reinforce measures to combat the worst forms of child labour

Meeting in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 20 to 23 November, stakeholders from the cocoa supply chain reaffirmed their commitment to work towards greater sustainability in cocoa growing.

The first World Cocoa Conference, held under the auspices of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and the International Cocoa Organisation (ICCO) gathered over 1200 participants representing cocoa-producing and consuming governments, civil society and industry actors. The conference was officially opened by H. E. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, who reminded participants of the importance of the cocoa sector for his country.

Speakers representing all Interested parties discussed the wide range of programmes, tools and means developed and refined over the years to work towards the sustainable development of the cocoa sector. These covered critical points to be improved such as farmer livelihoods, farmer training, methods to increase productivity, pest and disease management, cocoa certification to name but a few.

On Tuesday 20 November a keynote speech was delivered by the First Lady of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Mme Dominique Ouattara on the efforts underway to scale-up programmes that address farmers' livelihoods and importantly the well-being of children in cocoa growing communities. Mme Ouattara highlighted the vulnerability of children, notably in cocoa-growing, where children are still all too often undertaking difficult tasks on family farms, sometimes to the detriment of their well-being and development.

Mme Ouattara stated that while not all child work should be condemned, the elimination of the worst forms of child labour (WFCL), as defined under the country's plan of action (and aligned with ILO Conventions 182 on WFCL and 138 on minimum age to work) was a key priority for Côte d'Ivoire. Mme Ouattara reaffirmed that the best way to address children's needs was to reinforce their access to quality education.

A number of measures have been taken by Côte d'Ivoire over the past year to reinforce in-country capacity to tackle the issue, notably through:

- The creation of a 'Comité National de Surveillance' (National Monitoring Committee), headed by the First Lady;

- Training of local officials (prefects);
- A scaling-up of efforts to rehabilitate/build schools and ensure teachers are trained and available to teach in rural areas;
- The opening of a child protection centre in Abidjan to cater to the needs of children found in extreme situations of vulnerability;
- A dialogue between the First Ladies of Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Burkina-Faso to look at measures to combat trafficking of children in the region.

Mme Ouattara went on to praise the considerable work that is already underway by industry and civil society. She encouraged them to sustain and strengthen these initiatives and to work hand-in-hand with the Ivorian authorities to ensure programmes are coordinated and in-line with the country's strategic plan.

Mme Ouattara's speech was followed by a panel discussion involving Mme Raymonde GOUDOU COFFIE: Minister for Family, Women and Children, Côte d'Ivoire; Mme Patricia Sylvie YAO: Executive Secretary of the CNS and Chief of Cabinet to the First Lady; Nick Weatherill, Executive Director, International Cocoa Initiative, and Toussaint N'Guessan: Réseau Ivoirien pour l'Agriculture Durable.

The conference culminated in the signature by representatives of the cocoa sector – including ECA and Caobisco General Secretaries, Isabelle Adam and Sabine Nafziger, of '**The Abidjan Declaration**' that reaffirms the parties' commitment to take a visible and coherent approach in the various sustainability programs and to contribute to the implementation of national cocoa development plans based on transparent and fully participatory local Public-Private-Partnerships¹.

Industry engagement to increase farmers' livelihoods and combat WFCL

In respect to efforts underway to combat the worst forms of child-labour, Caobisco, ECA and their members, together with their partners and origin country governments, are continuously improving the programmes and tools developed and implemented to address this complex challenge.

To date, the private sector has invested collectively more than 73 Million Euros in projects and programmes to address the social needs of sustainability in the cocoa supply chain, in particular in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Additional individual company programmes bring the overall investment figure substantially higher⁽²⁾.

Industry is notably supporting the International Cocoa Initiative⁽³⁾, an independent multi-stakeholder foundation working with civil society, industry and origin governments to strengthen collective child labour mitigation efforts

Industry programs have already made a difference to over a million vulnerable children in West Africa (2) by focusing on:

- 1) Increasing access to education (building schools, training teachers)
- 2) Educating cocoa farmers on unacceptable labour practices
- 3) Better agricultural practices to improve yields and therefore better income for farmers.
- 4) Better farmer organisation

1 [For more information on the Abidjan Declaration:](http://www.icco.org/about-us/icco-news/206-abidjan-declaration-climaxes-the-world-cocoa-conference.html)

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2 More details on individual programs of companies can be found under www.responsible-cocoa.com

3 For more information see : <http://www.cocoainitiative.org/>

Our common goal is to bring about, through our combined efforts, a 70% aggregate reduction in the Worst Forms of Child Labour in the cocoa sectors of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana by 2020⁽⁴⁾. This is ambitious. It is achievable with the right resolve, commitment and collaboration by all partners. We must recognise, however, that social change takes time, and the context in which we are working is often unpredictable and challenging.

Caobisco, ECA and their members, together with other partners including representatives of producer countries, existing certifiers and civil society started work, in 2012, under the auspices of the European Standards Institute (CEN), on the definition of a European/Global (CEN/ISO) standard for sustainable and traceable cocoa to effectively provide a strong standard, supported by a broad range of stakeholders that aims to reduce confusion across all relevant stakeholder groups and is replicable at mainstream scale.

The private sector has significantly upgraded its actions towards a sustainable cocoa economy and will continue to do so until the goal of 100 % sustainable cocoa is reached in order to help farmers and their families improve their livelihoods.

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CAOBISCO is the Association of the Chocolate, Biscuits and Confectionery Industries of Europe. Through its national associations, CAOBISCO represents 2000+ companies across these three product categories. In terms of raw materials usage we represent over 50% of world cocoa consumption, 30% of EU sugar consumption and are the major users of dairy and cereals. CAOBISCO industries are involved at all levels and with many stakeholders in working towards a sustainable cocoa economy. Our commitment covers the three pillars of sustainable development, economic, environmental and social.

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The European Cocoa Association (ECA) based in Brussels is a trade association that groups the major companies involved in the cocoa bean trade and processing, in warehousing and related logistical activities in Europe. Together, ECA Members represent two-thirds of Europe's cocoa beans grinding, half of Europe's industrial chocolate production and 40% of the world production of cocoa liquor, butter and powder. On behalf of its members, ECA monitors and reports on development impacting the cocoa sector, both at regulatory and scientific levels. In addition, ECA is actively engaged in European and International fora related to the industry's contribution to a sustainable cocoa economy.