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Côte d'Ivoire Certification Report Advances Efforts to Help Children on Cocoa Farms

Findings Support Continued Focus on Safe, Responsible Labour Practices; to Education

ABIDJAN, Côte d'Ivoire (November 30, 2007) – Work to make a better life for children on cocoa farms in West Africa has taken an important step forward with the release of a pilot cocoa farming “Certification” report by the government of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast).

“This report represents a significant effort to collect and share detailed information on cocoa farming labour issues in a fully transparent manner – which is essential to helping cocoa farming families and the cornerstone of the certification process,” said Bill Guyton, President of the World Cocoa Foundation.

Added Isabelle Adam, General Secretary, European Cocoa Association, “Côte d'Ivoire has made a serious, sustained commitment to tackling labour issues on cocoa farms.”

Cocoa farming certification was established as part of the “Protocol” agreement and with the leadership of U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI) and Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY). It is a transparent and credible process that reports on the incidence of the worst forms of child labour and forced labour in a country’s cocoa sector, and on progress in reducing their incidence.

The report, based on in-depth research conducted on cocoa farms in six villages within three districts in Côte d'Ivoire, highlights a number of important issues and advances work to implement the certification process in the country’s cocoa sector.

The release of the pilot certification report is part of a broader effort by the government of Côte d'Ivoire to ensure cocoa is grown responsibly, without the worst forms of child labour and forced adult labour. This multi-year effort includes a number of capacity-building, enforcement and assistance programs.

“The Côte d'Ivoire report sheds light on a number of issues, such as the role of children on the family cocoa farm; the issues that affect these children, and the broader challenges facing cocoa farming communities,” said Larry Graham, President of the National Confectioners Association. “At the same time, it moves us closer to having a broadly deployed certification process that will drive widespread, lasting change.”

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Côte d'Ivoire is already in the field with a second, greatly expanded survey of cocoa farms. This expanded survey will lead to the implementation of certification across an area representing 50 percent of the country's cocoa production by July 1, 2008.

To improve labour practices on cocoa farms, the chocolate/cocoa industry works with West African governments, non-governmental organizations, experts and other stakeholders. These efforts are part of a broader commitment to the economic and social development of cocoa farming communities, and to environmental stewardship.

Industry efforts focus on four key areas:

- Ensuring that cocoa is grown responsibly, and that children are neither harmed nor denied schooling in the process of helping out on the family farm;
- Improving the long term sustainability of cocoa growing and the economic return from cocoa for smallholder farmers growing this important crop;
- Strengthening farming communities by addressing such needs as access to quality education and training;
- Supporting efforts to protect and enhance the environment in which cocoa farmers grow their crops.

Established in 2000, the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) plays a leading role in strengthening the partnership between industry and cocoa growing communities. WCF supports an extensive "farmer field school" program to help raise the living standards of cocoa farmers and their families.

A recently announced partnership between WCF and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will provide improved, quality education to youth and young adults in cocoa growing communities of West Africa, including Côte d'Ivoire.

Farm safety and health education are also at the center of programs supported by WCF and implemented by Winrock International, the International Foundation for Education and Self Help (IFESH), and Making Cents International, in coordination with local educational systems.

The International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) is also driving change in cocoa farming labour practices. Established in Geneva in 2002, The ICI is supported by individual chocolate and cocoa industry members. ICI efforts are led by a board composed equally of industry and civil society representatives.

The ICI is working at the farm village level in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, employing a community-empowering approach that engages local leaders in the development and implementation of action plans to address the worst forms of child labour and forced adult labour. The approach drives change in labour practices, improves educational opportunities for children, and creates a more actively engaged community.

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“As we learn more about the challenges facing cocoa farming families, we are better able to make a difference in their quality of life,” said David Zimmer, Secretary General of the Association of the Association of the Chocolate, Biscuit & Confectionery Industries of the EU (CAOBISCO). “Much work lies ahead, but this report is a significant, positive development.”

The Côte d'Ivoire report was released by the Office of the Prime Minister. The research was conducted by trained surveyors, and is based on 2007 visits to farms in three districts and six villages. To access the full report, visit www.cacao.ci.

Additional information on industry-supported efforts to support the social and economic development of cocoa farming communities can be found at the World Cocoa Foundation Web site, www.worldcocoa.org.

Information on the activities of the International Cocoa Initiative can be found at www.cocoainitiative.org

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