

November 1, 2007

The following statement was issued by the Chocolate Manufacturers Association (CMA) and the National Confectioners Association (NCA), and by the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), in response to the release of the “First Annual Report” on “Public and Private Initiatives to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the Cocoa Sector in Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana,” by the Payson Center at Tulane University.

In its report on efforts to address the worst forms of child labor in cocoa farming (<http://payson.tulane.edu/>), the Payson Center at Tulane University has taken a thorough approach.

We welcome the Payson Center’s efforts to identify the challenges involved in addressing labor issues on cocoa farms. It is only with a shared understanding of the issues involved that we can truly effect change in the lives of children and adults on cocoa farms.

The report highlights some of the real progress that has taken place since the signing of the Protocol in September of 2001. It recognizes industry-supported and individual company programs that are improving conditions in cocoa farming communities – such as greater access to education or the “farmer field schools” that help cocoa farming families earn more, while raising awareness of safe, responsible labor practices.

The governments of the Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana are taking concrete steps to improve the lives of children on cocoa farms, and specifically to address labor issues. These efforts – which are essential to bringing about long-term change - are detailed in the report

The report carefully examines efforts to implement a certification system for cocoa farming labor practices. While we differ with the authors’ views in several areas, there is a shared agreement that real progress has been achieved; that the governments of the Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana are taking a leadership role, and that the recent involvement of experts from Verité is an important step in developing an independent verification component for this critical effort.

The development of a certification system for smallholder agricultural production in the tropics that is being undertaken by our industry has not been attempted previously. The substantial progress that has been made is due in large part to the commitment and vision of the governments of the cocoa producing countries, which are working to ensure the safety and well-being of their cocoa farming families.

In addition, the Payson Center’s researchers offer several recommendations. Some of these recommendations speak to areas where there is already activity underway: we must be careful to avoid duplication of existing efforts.

In other areas, the recommendations offer new ideas for consideration.

Regardless of our views on each individual recommendation, we agree with the underlying themes – the importance of transparency, broad stakeholder engagement and measurable progress against a clearly defined, achievable set of goals.

We recognize the time and effort that has gone into this research effort. The Payson Center’s work will contribute to the body of knowledge around this complex issue.

At the same time, we believe that it is critical to devote our collective energies to productive *action* on the ground - projects and programs in West African cocoa farming communities and support for the work of West African governments tackling this issue in their respective countries.

Our efforts must remain focused on the cocoa farm, with specific attention focused on children on the farm.

For our part, we re-affirm our commitment to continue working with a broad range of stakeholders in the implementation of substantive, effective programs that improve the lives of children and adults on cocoa farms.

We also re-affirm our commitment – in no uncertain terms – to a rigorous, independently verified certification system for cocoa farming – that is being deployed across a region producing at least 50 percent of the cocoa in the Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana in advance of July 1, 2008.

In the report’s conclusion, the authors end with a quotation from the president of the World Cocoa Foundation, Bill Guyton:

“While progress has been made and we have learned valuable lessons, much more is required.”

This view, stated on behalf of our industry nearly two years ago, remains true today. Without question, there is much work to be done: meaningful change will continue to require a long-term commitment. In the meantime (as the Payson Center report highlights), the combined efforts of industry, governments and civil society are making a positive, measurable difference in West African cocoa farming communities.

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