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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **World Cocoa Foundation and Partners Draw on Lessons from Latin America to Reinvigorate Global Cocoa Sector**

*Nearly 300 Attend 13<sup>th</sup> Partnership Meeting in Guayaquil, Ecuador, to Discuss Cocoa Sustainability and Needs of Region's Farmers*

### *New Framework for Promoting Improved Cocoa Farming Practices Takes Shape*

VIENNA, VIRGINIA AND GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR - The World Cocoa Foundation today concluded its 13<sup>th</sup> Partnership Meeting in Guayaquil, Ecuador, the first to be held in Latin America. Nearly 300 attendees, including farmers, scientists, non-governmental organizations, and industry and government representatives, discussed cocoa sustainability and the needs of Latin America's 500,000 cocoa farmers, as well as drew upon this experience to benefit cocoa farmers in West Africa and Asia.

Bill Guyton, President, World Cocoa Foundation, said, "This was a very significant meeting for the World Cocoa Foundation and its partners. For the first time, we met in a major Latin American cocoa-producing country, bringing our discussions about the long-term potential of sustainably grown cocoa much closer to the farmers who most will benefit. Their participation is critically important to ensuring that the programs we support over the coming years effectively address their needs and drive positive change."

### **Framework to Promote Improved Cocoa Farming Practices Takes Shape**

A highlight of the two-day meeting was a series of presentations outlining a new framework for improved cocoa farming practices around the world. Speakers drew upon practical experience gained from more than a decade of cocoa sustainability work to discuss long-term goals in the areas of improving farmer incomes and productivity, ensuring that cocoa is grown responsibly, supporting the development of prosperous farming communities, and promoting sound environmental stewardship.

## **The Next Decade of Cocoa Sustainability in the Americas**

Representatives from Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and the Dominican Republic presented cocoa sustainability plans for their countries, focusing on the roles of national strategies, farmer training and farmer associations, as well as the outlook for continued market growth for the fine-flavor cocoa characteristic of this region.

“There is a huge opportunity for cocoa production in the Americas,” said Sergio Seminario, agricultural analyst, Grupo Seminario. “Demand for the region’s fine flavor cocoas is growing dramatically, reflecting the increasing popularity of premium chocolates in Europe and the United States. Our task at the national level today is to help farmers meet this demand for quality cocoa in a truly sustainable way.”

### **National and Regional Impact of ACCESO Program**

The regional and national impact of the Andean Countries Cocoa Export Support Opportunity Program (ACCESO) was highlighted, featuring presentations on the ability of Farmer Field Schools and farmer associations to significantly improve productivity and smallholder incomes.

“The ACCESO program has been a very significant step forward for cocoa production in the Andean region,” said Francisco Gomez, CasaLuker Colombia. “Thanks to ACCESO’s support for farmer training and the development of national strategies, we have seen dramatic improvements in productivity and incomes for participating cocoa farmers. It’s an outstanding model for the future.”

### **Workshops Focus on Reinvigorating Cocoa Production in Region**

A series of workshops covered such topics as: farm-level innovations that are reinvigorating cocoa growing; the role of sustainable cocoa in improving biodiversity and environmental conservation; and the impact and prevention of cacao diseases.

Commenting on the presentations, Tim Johnson, General Manager, Transmar Commodity Group of Ecuador, said, “We’re fortunate today to have broad agreement across our supply chain regarding the importance of helping farmers produce cocoa in a socially responsible and environmentally sound manner. It has become clear as well that achieving this will require a practical, actionable framework for enhancing farmer productivity, increasing their marketing efficiency, diversifying their incomes, and improving their skills and knowledge. It’s exciting now to begin the practical work of turning these objectives into meaningful and measureable change at the farm level.”

The next World Cocoa Foundation Partnership Meeting will be held in Hamburg, Germany, October 8 – 9, 2008.

### **About the World Cocoa Foundation**

Established in 2000, the World Cocoa Foundation is a leader in promoting economic and social development and environmental stewardship in 15 cocoa-producing countries around the world. With nearly 70 member companies from the Americas, Europe, and Asia, the Foundation actively supports a range of farm-level programs harnessing sustainable agriculture practices to improve the quality of life for the millions of smallholder farmers growing this unique crop. For more information about the World Cocoa Foundation, visit: [www.worldcocoafoundation.org](http://www.worldcocoafoundation.org).

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