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### **World Cocoa Foundation to Address Globalization Challenges and Opportunities Facing Smallholder Cocoa Farmers at June Partnership Meeting**

*Featured Speakers Include Patricia R. Sheikh, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Dr. Lutz Goedde, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

*Nearly 200 representatives from global industry, cocoa-producing countries, government agencies, development organizations and civil society to attend*

Washington, D.C. – The World Cocoa Foundation Partnership Meeting to be held in Washington, D.C. on June 3 – 4 will focus on the challenges and opportunities facing smallholder cocoa farmers in today’s globalized world. Nearly 200 representatives from the cocoa and chocolate industry, cocoa-producing countries, government agencies, development organizations and civil society will attend the two-day meeting.

Keynote speakers for the Partnership Meeting include Patricia R. Sheikh, Acting General Sales Manager and Deputy Administrator for the Office of Capacity Building and Development, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Dr. Lutz Goedde, Deputy Director, Agricultural Development Program of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Dr. Goedde will discuss the foundation’s approach to agricultural development and how it is working with a wide range of partners to provide millions of small farmers in the developing world with tools and opportunities to boost their yields, increase their incomes, and build better lives for themselves and their families.

Commenting on the Partnership Meeting, Bill Guyton, President of the World Cocoa Foundation, said, “This is an exciting time for everyone interested in the future of cocoa sustainability. Efforts to improve farming practices, incomes and overall wellbeing for the millions of people who grow this unique crop are expanding significantly. New companies, donors and implementing partners are joining us in this critically important work. Our June Partnership Meeting will provide an update about the growing impact of programs we and our partners have underway in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Americas, as well as about the challenges and opportunities we see ahead for cocoa farmers in our increasingly globalized world.”

Presentations and roundtable discussions during the Partnership Meeting will feature an overview of the Cocoa Livelihoods Program. This new, \$40 million program is being funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, eleven leading chocolate industry companies and other partners to significantly improve the livelihoods of approximately 200,000 cocoa farmers in West and Central Africa. Also included will be an update on the World Cocoa Foundation's recently announced sustainability principals and goals.

A variety of workshops will take place during the Partnership Meeting on critical issues facing cocoa farmers today, including land tenure, climate change, food security and other environmental issues; innovative approaches to improving education and community development; and efforts to foster international cooperation through research networks, exchanges and public-private partnerships. Other topics include cocoa value chain connections between farmers and consumers; workforce development; and the impact of trade and investment policy on the cocoa sector. An update on efforts to ensure safe and responsible labor practices in cocoa farming also will be presented during the meeting. Closing remarks will introduce the topic of building capacity to achieve a sustainable cocoa sector which will be the focus of the next Partnership Meeting in Brussels on October 14 and 15, 2009.

#### **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)