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PRESS RELEASE

Ahead of UN Climate Conference, Chocolate and Cocoa Companies Drive Momentum to End Tropical Deforestation

Washington, D.C. – Making good on a commitment announced in March, the world’s leading cocoa and chocolate companies are working with the governments of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana to double down on plans to end deforestation and forest degradation in the cocoa supply chain. In the past six months, the number of companies committed to action has surged from 12 to 35 industry partners from around the world, including chocolate makers, cocoa producers and traders, retailers, and companies that use cocoa in consumer products ranging from breakfast cereals to after-dinner sweets.

The industry group and the two countries’ governments have worked closely with environmental groups, international development and civil society organizations, and cocoa farmer associations, through a series of intensive face-to-face discussions involving more than 500 people. Together, they are developing a blueprint, or Framework for Action, for achieving a deforestation-free cocoa supply chain. The Framework for Action will be presented this November at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP23) in Germany.

Encompassed under a partnership called the [Cocoa & Forests Initiative](#), the effort draws on lessons learned and good practices from global efforts to reduce tropical deforestation in other commodities and sectors. The work is coordinated by the [World Cocoa Foundation](#) (WCF), [IDH - the Sustainable Trade Initiative](#), and The Prince of Wales’s [International Sustainability Unit](#).

Cocoa & Forests Initiative partners are united in their commitment to decisive action to end deforestation, protect forests, and help the farmers in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana who rely on cocoa farming in protected forest areas for their livelihood. For the first time, the companies and governments are working together to identify time-bound steps covering:

- Restrictions on production and sourcing of cocoa in protected forest areas
- Protection and restoration of forest areas, including strong forest law enforcement
- Boosting agricultural productivity on farms, so that farmers can grow “more cocoa from less land”
- Developing alternative livelihoods for farmers who currently depend on cocoa production in protected areas for their income and employment

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- Improved mapping and data collection of forest and agricultural areas
- Greater transparency in the supply chain, with the goal of tracking the origin of all cocoa production at the farm level

These actions will be supported by comprehensive monitoring to ensure effective reporting and accountability of government and company commitments.

“We recognize that the current model of cocoa production, which revolves around very small, family-owned farms that too often provide barely enough income to support basic family needs, has been a major driver of forest loss in West Africa,” says WCF President Rick Scobey. “Given limited economic opportunities, including lack of infrastructure and education, many poor farmers have encroached into forest areas to grow more cocoa. Lasting solutions to the problem of deforestation must therefore focus on poverty reduction, agricultural productivity, and environmental conservation – much of which the chocolate and cocoa industry is addressing through individual company-sponsored activities, as well as through [CocoaAction](#).”

“We are very encouraged by the efforts companies are making towards finalizing a Framework for Action and building a strong public-private partnership”, says Joost Oorthuizen, executive director of IDH. “Functioning partnerships, like the Cocoa & Forests Initiative, are key to improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, conserving natural habitats, and protecting tropical landscapes for future generations. IDH is proud to be the driving convener in the development of the Framework for Action, and strives for the voices of all stakeholders to be heard and brought to the table.”

The Cocoa & Forests Initiative places sustainability, human rights, and collaboration with cocoa-growing communities at the heart of the vision for a deforestation-free supply chain. “Our goal is to protect both people and the planet,” says Scobey. “Efforts to end deforestation must respect the rights of cocoa farmers and their families. The impact of proposed land-use changes on farmers’ lives must be fully assessed, and we have to minimize adverse social and economic impacts on communities. Farmers who currently grow cocoa in protected areas will need viable alternative sources of income.”

The two West African governments have welcomed the Cocoa & Forests Initiative:

Says Mamadou Fofana, chief advisor to the president of Côte d’Ivoire for issues related to the environment, sustainable development, water and forests, “Côte d’Ivoire, the world’s leading producer of cocoa, is proud to join with the private sector, environmental organizations, donors and others to formulate a Framework for Action that will correspond to the realities and needs of Ivorian cocoa farmers and their communities. Our engagement in this process is another demonstration of Côte d’Ivoire’s commitments that were made when we signed the New York Declaration on Forests in 2014. The Cocoa & Forests Initiative is a very important element aligned with our national strategy to find solutions to the problem of deforestation.”

“Ghana, as the second largest producer of cocoa in the world, applauds the progress made thus far through the Cocoa & Forests Initiative to develop a Framework for Action on the problems of deforestation and forest degradation”, says Joseph Aidoo, chief executive officer of the Ghana Cocoa Board. “This effort shows the strength of public-private partnerships in accelerating efforts to tackle some of our most challenging development problems, including deforestation. The convening of the private sector alongside government, civil society, and others is helping Ghana to accelerate our efforts to meet the UN REDD+ commitments we made at COP21.”

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The Cocoa & Forests Initiative is coordinated with a wide range of global and local environmental organizations, including the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020, Rainforest Alliance, and World Resources Institute. The work to date has been supported by several development partners, including the United Kingdom government's Department for International Development, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and the Green Commodities Program of the United Nations Development Program.

For a complete list of companies participating in the Cocoa & Forests Initiative, see [here](#).

For more information on the Cocoa & Forests Initiative, see [here](#).

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