
President of the World Cocoa Foundation,

Distinguished Participants of this Partnership and Roundtable Session,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed an honour to address distinguished participants at this partnership and roundtable meeting of the WCF. As a member of Government of the Republic of Ghana, I wish to convey a message of commendation from the Ghanaian Government to the WCF and your entire membership for the commitment you have shown in our collective campaign to achieving a sustainable cocoa economy.

To the organizers, my heart-felt gratitude for the platform you have offered me to share with the cocoa fraternity and other stakeholders, the innovative strategies that the Ghanaian Government, through the Ghana Cocoa Board (OCOBOD), has committed itself to pursuing to achieve sustainability in cocoa production and the modest gains made so far.

The cocoa industry is one key sector of the Ghanaian economy which offers several avenues for employment not only to people in our rural economy but also the urban dwellers. It is estimated the cocoa industry offers direct and indirect employment opportunity to about two million people in Ghana. Indeed, 800,000 farm households, mainly smallholder farmers, derive at least 60% of their annual income from the cocoa sub-sector. A greater number of these households rely solely on cocoa as their main source of income. This underscores the relevance of cocoa to the Government of Ghana in its poverty alleviation strategy.
In the last couple of years, the issue of sustainability of supply has become critical and engendered serious discussions among stakeholders within the world cocoa economy. This is expected because consumption is increasing with rapid increases in the world’s population, giving rise to concerns about consistency in supply and food security for suppliers of cocoa beans in this part of the developing world.

During the past three decades, the Government of Ghana has opened up the cocoa sector to private sector participation with the view to deepening the involvement of people in the rural communities. It began with the liberalization of the internal marketing operations in 1994, where COCOBOD established partnerships with private companies to purchase cocoa from the farmers. Beginning with only three companies, the number of private companies involved in this operation has risen dramatically to 27. These companies engage mainly the local people to purchase and deliver the produce to designated take-over centres.

Cocoa dominates the Ghanaian rural economy and as part of our strategy to reduce rural poverty, Government introduced the cocoa diseases and pests control (CODAPEC) program in 2001. With this strategy, Government sought to achieve the ultimate objective by employing people in the communities to spray the chemicals and through the program increase cocoa productivity. The CODAPEC program, which engages about 50,000 people in rural communities, was followed up with mass application of subsidized fertilizer beginning 2004. The result of these two major interventions is the increase in cocoa production from 350,000 tonne in 2000/01 to 1,000, 000 tonnes recorded in 2010/11 season.

We note that the implementation of these interventions has brought about new challenges, including environmental safety concerns. Let me assure stakeholders
that COCOBOD is seriously addressing these concerns through screening, and recommending only the chemicals suitable for application on cocoa by farmers.

Cocoa swollen shoot virus disease keeps spreading across the cocoa belt in West Africa. Through research, Ghana has been relentless in efforts to contain the disease by cutting-down infested cocoa farms and replanting them using the people in cocoa communities. This and a new program to control the spread of mistletoes are sources of employment opportunities which require semi-skilled human resource available in rural cocoa communities.

In January 2011, the Government assisted COCOBOD to re-introduce cocoa extension by a new approach of public-private-partnership. This extension model opened up new job opportunities as the private sector partners engaged young technical graduates to deliver extension messages to farmers in cocoa communities.

Let me also state that Government has been proactive with the development of cocoa roads infrastructure to improve economic activities and wellbeing in cocoa communities. During the past two seasons the Government has committed US$200 million towards the cocoa road project.

I have no doubts that key stakeholders of the cocoa economy, including the WCF, are keen and remain steadfast to achieving a common objective of engaging labour responsibly in cocoa production. This commitment goes beyond child labour-free cocoa industry to an industry which has profound respect for labour rights and honours economic wage so that the goal of a sustainable cocoa economy can be realized.
I would like to restate the long-standing interest of the Government of Ghana in the subject of child labour and our commitment to supporting effective programmes to eliminate worst forms of child labour in cocoa. First, the Government of Ghana signed the Harkin-Engel Protocol which led to the establishment of the National Programme for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour in Cocoa (NPECLC). Subsequent to this, Ghana signed the Framework of Action which set the year 2020 as the target to achieve a 70% reduction in worst forms of child labour in the cocoa sectors of Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana.

I am satisfied that from the onset, the Ghana Cocoa Board has been committing financial resources to training their personnel, substantially financing NPECLC programs and also partnering other stakeholders (industry and civil society groups) that are pursuing programmes to eliminate worst forms of child labour in cocoa.

In particular, COCOBOD has adopted educational and capacity building strategies focused primarily on raising awareness and sensitizing communities to combat abusive and exploitative labour practices in cocoa. Farmer rallies, farmer field schools and Radio FM stations are the main platforms for interactive community sensitization programs where trained officers delve deep into the relevant issues and answer questions from the audience in the local language.

Through sensitization programmes at the community level, community members of all ages are made aware of the concepts of child labour, causes of child labour, its effects, the dangers and how communities can contribute to address this social menace. Radio has been most effective medium to reach out to cocoa farmers and the communities.
Furthermore, COCOBOD has produced a movie entitled “Mmofra- Yen Daakye” (literally meaning Children- Our Future) to reinforce the campaign against worst forms of child labour in cocoa. This movie produced in local language with English subtitles featured very popular Ghanaian actors and actresses. In a story presented in a local scene, the movie portrays a visual representation of worst forms of child labour, its dangers and consequences.

A total of 50,000 copies of the movie were printed and distributed free in the cocoa growing communities through key stakeholders. Responses from the communities indicate that farming community members are showing great interest in the movie. Our objective was to package the educational message in an audio visual format using the best means available to create a lasting impression in the minds of community members in order to accelerate attitudinal change.

A documentary cataloguing COCOBOD’s efforts towards the elimination of child labour in the cocoa has also been produced. In line with its intended purpose, the documentary has been distributed to various stakeholders in the cocoa industry, home and abroad, to showcase COCOBOD’s contribution to the child labour elimination mission.

Also through partnerships, COCOBOD has been working with industry to reinforce the child labour campaign. A few of such partnerships are:

1. The Hershey’s Cocoa Link programme, where ICT is used to send cocoa extension and child labour education messages to farmers, and a cultural exchange program through virtual education between Assin Fosu Demonstration primary school and the Hershey’s School in the USA arranged and being implemented by Source Trust; and
2. Kraft Foods Cadbury Cocoa Partnership programme and Cocoa Certification programmes being led by a number of private sector organisations for farmers to become certified producers of Rainforest Alliance, UTZ and Fairtrade cocoa. These are production strategies which assure consumers that the cocoa is of highest quality without child labour. Through this strategy, the combined volume of certified (Fairtrade, UTZ/RA) cocoa from Ghana is close to 80,000 tonnes.

Today, we are also seeing an example of building bridges and alliances in the fight against worst forms of child labour in cocoa. Our engagement as partners in this campaign is reflected at all levels (national, regional, districts and local). I will take this opportunity to congratulate all partners for their various initiatives in the campaign to stop worst forms of child labour.

I hope that the synergy that will emerge out of this meeting will illustrate the approach that is needed to reinforce this campaign.

There is a strong commitment behind the movement against child labour. Laws are important but personal commitment is critical because it makes the difference. That, essentially, is why you are here. You believe in the fight. I think we now have clear evidence of a strong political will to move forward quickly.

We owe it to the children of today to help them realize their potential to become the adults of tomorrow; and to fully develop their talents and strengths at school rather than endure work which weakens and destroys that potential. We must do these things so that they can have the childhood to which they are entitled.

And by so doing, we lay the foundations for them to have an adult life as full-fledged citizens living in dignity and contributing to the development of their society under decent working conditions.
Mr Chairman, I would finally like to reiterate the resolve of Government of Ghana and COCOBOD to work closely with stakeholders to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in cocoa. We believe that with commitment from you and all stakeholders, the child labour elimination mission will be accomplished.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS US ALL.