



Accra, 15th of April 2021

SUSTAINABLE COCOA DIALOGUE - GHANA

ROUNDTABLE ON TRACEABILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY WITH REGARDS TO CHILD LABOUR

On the 15th of April 2021, the second meeting of the Ghanaian dialogue on sustainable cocoa was held via Zoom. One hundred and sixty-seven (167) participated in the event, which lasted for three (03) hours. The meeting was moderated by Mr **Viwanou Gnassounou, former Assistant Secretary-General at the ACP Secretariat**.

Ignatius Baffour Awuah, Minister of Employment and Labour Relations of Ghana made introductory remarks. He acknowledged that child labour is a reality in the Ghanaian cocoa sector and expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by different stakeholders to tackle the problem. He noted that the country child labour situation is sometimes exaggerated because it is not situated in the context of Ghanaian cultural norms and practices. Notwithstanding this, he reiterated the government's belief that every child deserves the opportunity to develop their talents to the fullest and should not be disadvantaged through exposure to excessive or inappropriate work. The Minister outlined some of the measures that the government has undertaken to increase school attendance, including the Capitation Grant, which eliminates fees for primary schooling. In the cocoa sector, the government has assumed the responsibility for some of the hazardous work that had previously been conducted by farmers and their children, such as the spraying of pesticides. Even more importantly, the government has sought to protect farmers from fluctuations in international cocoa prices, by maintaining regulated farm-gate prices at elevated levels and introducing the Living Income Differential. The Minister then observed that most Ghanaian farmers do not want their children to remain on the cocoa farm; most would prefer their children to complete their education in order to secure employment in urban areas. However, the poorest farmers may not have any other choice but to ask their children to work after school hours or during their vacation. In this context, he decried the fact that Ghana was able to earn only USD 2 billion from cocoa production in 2019, a small fraction of the overall value of the global chocolate and confectionery retail industry (USD 107 billion).¹ In order to reach a permanent solution to the problem of child labour in the cocoa sector, he insisted on the importance of prices and a 'living income' for cocoa farmers. In his conclusion, the Minister asked participants to abandon sectorial approaches to child labour and to approach the issue holistically, to include other sectors such as illegal mining. Looking to the future, he encouraged stakeholders to build on existing interventions, in particular the National Plan of Action II on the Elimination of the Worst

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56687427>

Forms of Child Labour in Ghana, the “Child-Labour Free Zones” and Child Labour Monitoring Systems (CLMS) as models to be replicated throughout the country.

Diana Acconcia, Ambassador, Delegation of the European Union to Ghana introduced the main topic of the roundtable: *traceability, transparency, and accountability with regards to child labour in cocoa supply chains*. She repeated some of the EU’s commitments on the topic of child labour, including the announcement of a “zero-tolerance” approach to child labour by the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, and the recent EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. She congratulated Ghana for ratifying the two key ILO conventions intended to prevent child labour – ILO conventions No. 138 about minimum age for access to work, and ILO convention No. 182 about banning the worst forms of child labour – and stressed the important monitoring role performed by ILO to ensure the fulfilment of the commitments. Ms Acconcia acknowledged that child labour is a complex issue that must be addressed from different angles – with particular emphasis on root causes like farmer poverty – and in this regard, she referred participants to a recent report on child labour in the cocoa sectors of Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire, commissioned by the EUⁱ. For the purposes of the roundtable, she invited participants i) to focus on current mechanisms to identify, detect, monitor, prevent and remedy child labour in cocoa supply chains; to discuss possible options to increase the coverage and effectiveness of these systems and to formulate recommendation on how development partners (including the EU) can best support key actors and initiatives in this area. She concluded by expressing the belief that a commonly agreed traceability system is essential to guarantee to all stakeholders that cocoa is produced and traded in a sustainable manner.

Ms. Elizabeth Akanbombire, Head of the Child Labour Unit, Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR) provided an overview of the government’s efforts to tackle child labour, strengthen Child Labour Monitoring Systems and ensure oversight of the cocoa sector. She described the comprehensive legal framework that exists to tackle child labour in Ghana. She also mentioned some of the social programmes that have been put in place to protect children, such as LEAP (Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty) and the NHIS (National Health Insurance Scheme). In the realm of education, she provided an overview of the government’s efforts to improve school enrolment through the Capitation Grant, the provision of school meals, the payment of school and exam fees, and the supply of textbooks, uniforms and sandals, which have increased school enrolment to over 95%. Ms Akanbombire then narrowed in on some more specific elements of the government’s overall strategy. She introduced the concept of the GCLMS, and provided details on the concept of “Child Labour Free Zones”. Importantly, she specified that CLFZs do not guarantee the total absence of child labour but rather seek to ensure that support structures are in place to address child labour efficiently and effectively wherever it is found. Ms Akanbombire then explained that the Government is in discussions with industry establish a new Public-Private Partnership, “Children First in Cocoa”. So far, a Statement of Intent and a costed framework have been developed. Ms Akanbombire concluded with some recommendations on the way forward, urging stakeholders to work towards the harmonisation of the national GCLMS and other child labour monitoring systems in Ghana, to support the training of labour officers / inspectors, expand logistical support to labour inspectors to better cover the informal sector, to improve collaboration with cooperatives, and to continue the implementation of CLFZs.

Dr Emmanuel Opoku, Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) of the Ghana COCOBOD, made a presentation on behalf of the Chief Executive, Honourable Joseph Aidoo. He described the initial efforts that were made to set up the GCLMS, which relied on Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) to identify and protect children. The CCPCs were piloted/implemented in a few selected communities, but were unsustainable because they were run on a voluntary basis. Voluntary

certification schemes have achieved greater prominence in recent years, due in part to the payment of premiums to farmers. However, certification systems cover about 8-10% of cocoa farmers in Ghana. There had been complaints by farmers about the proliferation of burdensome, inconsistent, and confusing criteria imposed on them and a lack of transparency and accountability in the delivery of premium payments. The COCOBOD's Cocoa Sector Development Strategy II (CSDS II) integrates sensitization on child labour into the extension services offered through its Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED). However, challenges remain. First, Dr Opoku pointed to the emerging consensus that a decent living income for farmers is a necessary condition for the prevention of child labour and deforestation. He further said, the premium payments that are made available under voluntary certification schemes are undermined by the consistent shortfall in demand for certified cocoa, and the small share of farmers that are actually certified. Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana tried to correct this deficiency through the introduction of the Living Income Differential, but market and other forces are rapidly eroding the expected gains that were made through the joint initiative. Dr Opoku acknowledged lack of adequate data on cocoa farmers and their households, including data on the number of children involved in cocoa farming. The absence of data makes it difficult to distinguish between children who work on farms with their biological parents and victims of child-trafficking. Mr Opoku expressed optimism that the COCOBOD's ongoing Cocoa Management System (CMS) will be a robust mechanism for tracking the progress of children, exposing early signs of child labour and detecting child labour, child-trafficking and child slavery in cocoa supply chain. He also expressed the hope that the African Regional Standard on Sustainable Cocoa (ARS 1000) will address cultural misconceptions relating to child labour in cocoa. Lastly, he commended the revival of the Cocoa Cooperative system, which can count on 11,300 registered cooperatives, bringing together 750,000 cocoa farmers, to support the government's efforts to fight child labour. Dr Opoku concluded by stating that responsible and sustainable production of cocoa will come at a cost to the farmer, to Licensed Buying Companies, to the COCOBOD as well as to upstream actors in the supply chain. If the EU intends to introduce legislation, then these additional costs must not be omitted from consideration.

Ms Tawiah Agyarko-Kwarteng, Sustainable Sourcing Representative, West Africa, The Hershey Company, reiterated the industry position that child labour is unacceptable in any agricultural supply chain including cocoa. She explained that Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS) is a method of detection and remediation of child labour among children ages 5 to 17 years old, which can help to identify cases of child labour and provide remediation to victims. In a CLMRS, members of farmers' cooperatives or the wider community are recruited as facilitators, who then receive training and build skills to detect and report instances of child labour. As trusted members of the community, they are in the best position to detect cases of child labour and suggest the most appropriate means of remediation (e.g. providing family farms with a wheelbarrow, clean cook stoves or better tools). CLMRS incorporates elements of, and is fully coherent with, the GCLMS. CLMRS has been shown to reduce child labour by 50%. Despite these efforts, child labour remains a persistent challenge in cocoa growing communities and rural areas in, because the root causes remain the same: farmer poverty, lack of equitable access to early childhood services and programmes, and difficulties in accessing adequate and quality education in cocoa communities. Leading cocoa and chocolate companies in the cocoa sector are therefore increasing the coverage of CLMRS and have committed to 100% coverage in their direct supply chains in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana by 2025. By the end of 2021, International Cocoa Initiative (ICI)'s members are expecting to cover 540,000 cocoa-growing households in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. These efforts are in line with international best practice such as the United Nations Guiding Principles on business and human rights (UNGPs), as well as evolving legislation and expectations at national and international level, in the forthcoming EU legislation on mandatory due

diligence. Finally, Ms Agyarko-Kwarteng made a series of recommendations to all stakeholders. She called for effective implementation of the (ARS 1000) . She stressed the importance of uniting and harmonizing different child labour monitoring and social traceability systems, through a coordinated approach under national leadership. She acknowledged that industry efforts must be linked more systematically to the GCLMS and other national services. Finally, she called on the EU to provide funding and technical expertise to support the development of infrastructure in rural areas, to strengthen land and tree tenure policies, to expand early childhood and women's empowerment programmes, and to incentivize sustainable cocoa production in origin countries.

Patrick Owusu, Manager, Asunafo North Farmers' Cooperative and Marketing Union, presented the perspectives of farmers with regards to CLMRS. Mr Owusu provided details on how CLMRS work at the community level. He explained that community facilitators visit farmers' homes / farms to raise awareness about the issue of child labour, to identify children that are at risk, to collaborate with the families and their communities to recommend appropriate remediation activities, and to follow up on identified cases, checking whether remediation has been effective and whether the child has stopped engaging in hazardous work. Mr Owusu explained that, thanks to CLMRS, farmers no longer hide cases of child labour, but instead allow their children to be interviewed and monitored. Child labour cases are identified based on peer-to-peer interviews and data collected from farmers and their children. Mr Owusu provided some specific examples of remediation activities: livelihood programmes to improve farmers' incomes (e.g. soap-making or bread-making), education support schemes, the construction of school buildings, purchase and distribution of exercise books. The benefits of the CLMRS are widely acknowledged among farmers of the Asunafo Union. The CLMRS has also made it easier to retain certification and receive premium payments. In his recommendations, Mr Owusu called on stakeholders to strengthen Child Protection Oversight Committees at the Regional and Municipal level, to increase resources for Social Welfare Departments to enable better coordination of CSO activities, to reinforce child labour policies in the mining and timber industries, to intensify monitoring and remediation activities and to expand and bolster farmers' cooperatives.

Barima Akwasi Amankwaah, National Coordinator, Ghana NGOs Coalition on Rights of the Child (GNCRC), member of the Ghana Civil-society Cocoa Platform (GCCP), provided some insights into the role of CSOs and communities in monitoring child labour. He explained that community-based monitoring systems (CBMS) are organized structures put in place by CSOs to actively participate in the implementation of government's legislation, policies, and programmes; without these, government interventions would be less successful. In many cases, CSOs are key partners in the implementation of the GCLMS. They play an important role in sensitization, in the establishment of Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs), in the advocacy for the registration of children in the community register, for the withdrawal of children from situations of child labour in its worst forms, in the referral of children to relevant government services, or to facilitate remediation activities. To ensure success, CBMS must ensure that there is ownership among implementers and community members who are the primary beneficiaries such systems, and must continuously monitor the process. CSOs also make significant contributions to data collection, by inserting the information gathered during their activities into a centralized data system, further enhancing transparency, traceability and accountability in cocoa supply chains. In his conclusion, Mr Barima Akwasi Amakwaah reiterated that CSOs stand ready to provide data to partners including government at any point in time and to continue to support functional departments and agencies of the Ghanaian government to implement the GCLMS.

Andrew Addoquaye Tagoe, Deputy General Secretary, Agricultural Workers Union of Ghana (GAWU), presented the Trade Union's perspectives on child labour and the potential of Child Labour

Free Zones. The Union works on the issue of child labour across all agricultural sectors (fishing, palm oil, cocoa, rice, etc.) in collaboration with international partners. There is a specific division within the Union dedicated to cocoa farmers, who account for over 20,000 members. Furthermore, the Union routinely inserts clauses to combat child labour and child trafficking within the collective agreements that it negotiates with employees. Mr Tagoe then called for a “paradigm shift” to ensure that stakeholders shift their focus from the symptoms to the root causes of child labour. He commended the integrated area-based approach that has been promoted by the government through its publication on the *Protocols and Guidelines for Establishing Child Labour Free Zones*, and its focus on education, decent work for adults and community-based systems and structures. He emphasized the importance of partnerships between different actors in setting up CLFZs and urged the EU to support these efforts in a way that promotes rural development, decent work, social protection and improve livelihoods and farmer incomes. He concluded on an optimistic note, declaring that cocoa production without child labour is possible and commending all stakeholders for participating in the national dialogue on sustainable cocoa.

Anne-Claire Dufay, UNICEF representative in Ghana, began by reminding participants that 2021 is the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, before providing an overview of the legal and policy framework that exists in Ghana with regards to child labour. She cited the Children’s Act of 1998 which explicitly states that “no person shall engage a child in exploitative labour” (defined as labour that deprives them of their health or educational development). Furthermore, she noted that Section 96 of the Children’s Act includes provisions for legal enforcement in the informal sector. In response to remarks from previous speakers, she highlighted that existing data – including data collected by the Ghanaian Statistical Service through its Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS 6) in 2014 – show that almost half a million children are involved in child labour in the cocoa sector (5% of children aged 5-17 years). There is further evidence to suggest that up to 1.9 million children (21%) are involved in child labour in general, of which 1.2 million (14%) are involved in the worst forms of child labour. In response to this challenge, Ms Dufay recommended a multi-sectoral approach that puts cocoa farmers and their children at the centre of their interventions, addresses farmer poverty and improves access to basic social services, such as birth registration, education, health and nutrition, clean water and other social services. She urged the private sector to abide by the principles of responsible business conduct (RBC) and to develop their own due diligence systems, to ensure that incidents of child labour are reported to the relevant government institutions. However, she urged stakeholders to avoid an excessive focus on monitoring and due diligence and to turn their attention, instead, to prevention and addressing the root causes of child labour. She also encouraged stakeholders to build on the government’s efforts to set up national systems, to ensure that the national government is in the lead, and to ensure that efforts are integrated across economic sectors.

Question and Answer Session

In response to **a question on how to address structural poverty among farmers within the framework of NAP 2**, **Ms Elizabeth Akanbombire** expressed her conviction that cocoa prices must increase and that cocoa farmers must be well-paid for their labour. She confirmed that NPA 2 includes initiatives to create additional income-generating activities for farmers. In response to another question on the **coordination of different child labour monitoring systems**, she emphasized that the Ghana Child Labour Monitoring System, which was developed with inputs from all stakeholders, should serve as an over-arching framework. She expressed the government’s ambition to create a “portal” that would allow data from other monitoring systems to be uploaded directly into the GCLMS database.

In response to **a question about the African Regional Standard for Sustainable Cocoa**, and how it can improve traceability in the cocoa sector, **Dr Emmanuel Opoku** reminded participants that the ARSO

standard is a response to the ISO Standard 34101 on Sustainable Cocoa and was developed to better reflect the cultural specificities of the two largest producing countries, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. The African Regional Standard, he claimed, is more likely to produce tangible results because it is better adapted to local realities. Insofar as traceability is concerned, he reassured participants that the forthcoming Cocoa Management System will optimize the process of registering cocoa farmers and their children, improve data collection, monitor the progress of children and identify cases of child labour. The Cocoa Management System will also serve to track the geographical origin of the cocoa and to check for deforestation and environmental degradation in cocoa supply chains. **In response to another question on the progress of the joint Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana Cocoa Initiative**, Dr Opoku confirmed that both countries' parliaments have approved the establishment of the new institution and an instrument of ratification has been presented at the presidential level. The appointment of the Executive Secretary and the process of securing a physical location for the HQ is ongoing.

In response to a question on data-sharing, Ms Tawiah Agyarko-Kwarteng confirmed that data is already being shared with government partners on an annual basis. She confirmed that the Ghana Child Labour Monitoring System is currently being updated, to make improvements to the data-sharing process. **In response to a question on the cost of CLMRS**, Mr Patrick Owusu replied that efforts are made to keep the cost of CLMRS as low as possible, for example by appointing members of the community as facilitators. However, some budget items are indispensable (e.g. transport) and there will always be a cost associated with the implementation CLMRS, although these costs can be recovered through certification and premium payments. **In response to a question on the role of Unions in CLMRS**, Mr Tagoe explained that farmers and communities must organise themselves into cooperatives and Unions, to negotiate more effectively with the government and with international partners.

i Ending child labour and promoting sustainable cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, December 2020, TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE EXPERTISE GROUP.