



REMARKS BY CSO REPRESENTATIVE AT MAIDEN EDITION OF EU/GHANA COCOA TALKS

1. Civil Society in Ghana would like to commend the EU/Ghana government for initiating this localized cocoa talks, we believe it's a good start.
2. The focus of these talks are on sustainable cocoa, but the bigger question is; whose definition of sustainable cocoa are we talking about?
3. We need to avert our minds to the fact that when it comes to such vague and broad concepts like sustainability; each stakeholder have their own definition and expectations.
 - To the chocolate manufacturer, sustainability might be continuous availability of cheap cocoa beans, cocoa butter and related raw materials
 - To the producer government, sustainability might be steady flow of production and foreign exchange from trade in the beans
 - To the EU, sustainability might be stopping imported deforestation and child labour
 - To the farmer, sustainability might be ability to continually take care of their family, creating wealth, the ability to afford good healthcare, education and other social amenities for their children and community from the proceeds they get from selling their cocoa beans
4. But for us as NGOs/CSOs and especially as members of the Ghana Civil Society Cocoa Platform, we do not have any pre-conceived expectations but only to ensure that there is a balance in fulfilling all the expectations of various stakeholders and fundamentally ensuring that the environment does not suffer at any one's expense and devoid of any human rights violations.
5. However, like most pragmatists, CSOs in Ghana mostly align with farmers expectations because we believe they have been the worst affected stakeholders in the cocoa value chain and have suffered systemic exclusion for far too long.
6. So as we all begin this very important journey of finding solutions to guaranteeing the production and supply of sustainable cocoa in Ghana, we would like to state the following points for everyone to reflect on;
 - a. First, we are mindful of the history of this industry which has benefited companies and governments at the expense of farmers and forests. If farmers and forests are our priority, then we need to see farmers interests prioritized in these cocoa talks,
 - b. The major problem in Ghana's cocoa sector is not deforestation or child labour, no, the problem is "**unfair pricing of cocoa beans and the farmers inability to obtain living income**" from the sales of beans they labour to produce under very challenging circumstances
 - Deforestation and child labour are only visible symptoms of the actual problem
 - If farmers get enough income from their cocoa beans, they will be in the position to hire labour to work on their farms thereby avoiding the use of their children on the farm,
 - Again, if farmers get enough income from their cocoa beans on the small piece of land they farm, they will not need to expand into protected areas to make new farms thereby avoiding cutting down forests



- That is not to say that increasing cocoa pricing alone will do the magic, no, there is even a possibility that increasing cocoa prices will lead to an increase in both deforestation and child labour as more people could be incentivized to enter into cocoa farming.
 - Hence, prices increment must be accompanied by promulgation of restrictive laws as well as their enforcement.
- b. The second problem area is governance reform – specifically, policy and legal non-alignment in the cocoa sector
- For example, why must forestry officials be prevented from cutting down cocoa farms in forest reserves when they are detected? Because there is conflict of policies and laws.
 - Then there is the issue of land and tree tenure which is making it hard for people to nurture trees on their farms and get protection for outside forest reserve trees (off-reserve trees).
 - Again, there is the issue of non-enforcement of child labour laws, statutory bodies clothed with power to enforce the laws are unable to do so due to several governance challenges.
 - Another governance challenge is lack of transparency and access to information in the sector. There is not enough policy and legal framework that guarantee access to information and promote transparency in the cocoa sector
7. In conclusion, CSOs would like to see that these cocoa talks do not become just a window dressing for the actual problems in the sector which we believe are well known to all gathered on this virtual meeting. We would like to see concrete plans to address these problems that we have listed above through a proper multi-stakeholder approaches similar to what happened with the FLEGT-VPA processes. The solution to the problems in the cocoa sector lies among cocoa stakeholders and we need to create the platform for them to bring out the issues and find the solutions among themselves. We commend government and the EU for the initiative and the early participation of various stakeholders. We want to see a continuous and proper multi-stakeholder deliberative process where all stakeholders come together to find solutions to problems in the cocoa sector.

Thank You

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