

Press release

German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa elects Merit Buama as Chairwoman of the Board of Directors

Berlin, 22 June 2021 – The Board of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa elected Merit Buama as its new Chairwoman. Ms Buama is responsible for cocoa programmes worldwide at Alfred Ritter GmbH & Co. KG and has been supporting the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa for several years. Merit Buama sees her task above all in shaping a consensus among GISCO's members: "The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa is a joint project of the most diverse actors, which does not mean, however, that discussions within the members may not also be conducted in a constructively critical manner," Buama says. She also sees the strengthening of the pioneering role of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa as a core element of GISCO's work. Evelyn Bahn, INKOTA-netzwerk e.V., and Florian Schütze, Schwarz-Gruppe, were re-elected as Deputy Chairpersons.

Merit Buama, a graduate in agricultural economics, succeeds Wolf Kropp-Büttner who did not stand for re-election. However, he will remain a member of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa. On behalf of GISCO's members, the Board of Directors and the Secretariat thank Mr Kropp-Büttner for his many years of trustful cooperation. His excellent commitment as well as his professional and consensual manner contributed to the positive and sustainable development of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa. However, there is still a lot to do on the way to a sustainable cocoa sector, he emphasised. Merit Buama will now take on this challenging task.

Before joining Ritter, Merit Buama worked in Ghana for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH as a consultant in regional agricultural projects. Her focus was on the business aspects of promoting smallholder farmers, whereby she supervised activities in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria and Cameroon. Already there, she was thematically involved with cocoa, for example in the professionalisation of cooperatives.

The local poverty, child labour and deforestation are major challenges in the West African cocoa sector: "Structural change is needed in cocoa cultivation, which poses many challenges due to the complex requirements and the large number of actors," she says. The self-confessed chocolate lover draws her enthusiasm for her work above all from the partnerships with cocoa farmers and their organisations on the ground: "When I know where the cocoa in the chocolate comes from and how passionate the cocoa producers are about sustainable cocoa farming together with their organisations, it gives me an incredible amount of motivation".

In addition to the Chairwoman and her Deputies, the Board of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa comprises:

- Dr Artur Ickstadt, Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL)
- Sebastian Lesch, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
- Dr Torben Erbrath, Association of the German Confectionery Industry (BDSI)
- Christian Mieles, Federal Association of the German Food Trade e.V. (BVLH)
- Dr Bettina von Reden, TransFair e.V. - Fairtrade Germany



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Captions:

Left: Merit Buama is the new Chairwoman of the Board of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa.

Right: After seven years as Chairman of the Board of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa, Wolf Kropp-Büttner did not stand for re-election as Chairman. At GISCO's 9th General Meeting, he was bid farewell by the participants with high appreciation and thanks.

About the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa

The 'German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa' (GISCO) is a joint initiative of the German government, civil society, industry and retail and brings together relevant actors from Germany with those from the producing countries and international initiatives. The aim of GISCO is to improve the living conditions of cocoa farmers, to conserve and preserve natural resources and biodiversity in the producing countries, and to increase the share of sustainably produced cocoa. The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa currently has 76 members and is open to other interested parties.

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