



*Press release*

**Annual General Meeting 2017 of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa:**

**German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa focuses on human rights and children's rights**

- GISCO members reach out to over 1 million farmers in West Africa through 46 projects
- Share of sustainably produced cocoa in confectionery is to increase

Berlin, 09 May 2017 – One important goal of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) is to improve living conditions of cocoa farmers. In this regard, it is an essential concern to secure human rights and especially children's rights. During the fourth annual general meeting of the multi-stakeholder initiative, which is organized as an association, about 90 GISCO members and guests discussed different approaches to create a better future for children in cocoa producing countries. Representatives of the Fair Labor Association (FLA), the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI), the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), the Program PRO-Enfant (KfW and GIZ) and the Hamburger Stiftung für Wirtschaftsethik presented their initiatives and insights. It became clear that one substantial approach is helping women to generate income in general in order to protect children from exploitation and to improve living conditions of the families. It should be noted, however, that the governments of the producing countries are integrated into all activities.

At the general meeting, GISCO members resolved to significantly further increase the share of sustainably produced cocoa in chocolate and confectionery manufactured by them. By the year 2020, the share should be 70 percent. Currently, a share of 57 percent of cocoa in GISCO members' cocoa-containing end products is derived from sustainable resources, it is a share of 45 percent in the entire sector (based on 2016 data).

**German Federal Government supports GISCO's work and acknowledges its progress.**

Dr. Hermann Onko Aeikens, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), called GISCO a "success story". "GISCO connects social and ecological responsibility with economic sense", Aeikens said in his welcome speech at the annual general meeting of GISCO in Berlin on 04 May 2017. Therewith, he also reflected on the topic "Human rights and children's rights" which the members declared to be their main area of exchange. "Child labor is still sad reality in many countries and, unfortunately, in the cocoa industry as well", said Gunther Beger, department head of the development ministry, in his opening speech. "It is the joint responsibility of the private sector and governments, especially in the partner countries, to eliminate dangerous and abusive child labor."

Wolf Kropp-Büttner, GISCO Chairman, stressed that GISCO wants to enhance reflection on child protection and children's rights approaches with the help of the

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project PRO-PLANTEURS in Côte d'Ivoire. "GISCO members altogether reach more than one million farmers and are involved in 46 projects merely in West Africa", Kropp-Büttner said. A lot projects include activities to fight child labor.

GISCO is a joint initiative of the German confectionery industry, the German retail grocery trade, civil society and the German Federal Government, represented by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The speakers confirmed that the multi-stakeholder initiative is a promising approach to seek for fundamental solutions.

Gaël Lescornec, Partnerships Manager at the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), an international membership organization representing over 80% of the global cocoa and chocolate industry, stressed that one company or actor alone cannot address the challenges in the cocoa sector. "The challenges are complex. Therefore, joint action and mutual learning are important strategic approaches to ensure sustainable impact", she said. The areas of priority identified by industry and partners especially in West Africa include deforestation, professionalization of farmers including access to inputs, services and finance as well as social development particularly education and women's economic empowerment which are key to ending child labor.

Nick Weatherill, Executive Director at the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI), came to a similar conclusion. He said that, apart from the great concern caused by the many child laborers still working in the agricultural sector in general, it is also important to understand the context, particularly demographic and agricultural trends, as well as the complex and diverse root causes of child labor that touch on many different sectors. "We do not solve the problem by simply raising awareness or sending children to school. We need to act on multiple fronts simultaneously, including addressing the household poverty that is at the heart of the issue", Weatherill said. ICI's goal to improve protection for one million children in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana by 2020 comprises three approaches: implementing child-center community development, promoting responsible supply-chain management, and enhancing knowledge and practice through research and capacity-building. For ICI, the optimal approach addresses the problem holistically, at all levels, and for this, strong multi-stakeholder collaboration is needed, as well as supportive and enabling national policies.

Richa Mittal, Fair Labor Association (FLA), said that poverty is a main driver for abusive forms of child labor. She views supporting women as an essential approach. Often; women do not generate own income from their work in cocoa production. However, according to Mittal, income of women is important because it is used for the family's well-being. Women mainly generate own income from cultivating different cash crops and marketing them. "The economic empowerment of women is of great importance to enhance their rights and participation", Mittal said. Women must get access to finance and sufficient food in order to secure medical aid, education and nutrition for their children in turn. "The responsibility often rests with women alone", Mittal made clear.

Another practical example for child protection is the project PRO-Enfant in Burkina Faso which is financed with funds from the KfW-Bank and was presented by Telse Badil, program manager at the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ). Over half its citizens are below the age of 18 and as such are considered children. Four out of every ten children play an active role in supporting themselves or

their family economically. The program helps to improve children's chances by setting up child protection networks and by providing school scholarships.

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**Caption:**

The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa discussed strategies for improved protection of children at the annual general meeting in Berlin in early May

*Photo: German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa*

**About the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa**

*The association German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) is a joint initiative of the Federal Government, civil society as well as industry and retail grocery trade. It brings together relevant actors from Germany, the producing countries and international initiatives. The aim of the forum is to improve the livelihood of cocoa farmers, to protect and conserve natural resources and biodiversity in the producing countries, as well as increase the proportion of sustainably produced cocoa. GISCO currently has about 70 members and is open to other interested parties.*

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