

Press Release

## **10th General Meeting of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO)**

### **Human rights due diligence in focus**

#### **German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa agrees on binding monitoring and more commitment in the implementation of the goals**

**Berlin, 04.05.2022** – More than 90 members and guests of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) came together physically and virtually in Berlin on 04 May 2022 on the occasion of their tenth general meeting on the topic of *Human Rights Due Diligence in the Cocoa Sector: Working Together to Ensure Better Living Conditions for Cocoa Farmers*. The new EU Directive proposal on corporate due diligence for sustainability in the cocoa sector and the associated opportunities and challenges were the focus of the event.

Human rights are at the core of development cooperation, said Dr Bärbel Kofler, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), who opened the General Meeting together with the Minister for Food and Agriculture Cem Özdemir. The central task of politics, business and civil society is therefore to fill human rights principles with life and to create binding framework conditions for their consistent implementation. Together with its European partners, GISCO has established an ambitious monitoring system that creates more transparency and makes successes and the need for action visible, she emphasized.

In his video message, Federal Minister Özdemir said: "Germany must be a role model if we want to be credible". He pointed out that all stakeholders must pull together to create more awareness of fairness among consumers who enjoy the fruits of cocoa farmers' labour.

Merit Buama, Chair of the Board of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa, welcomed the participants: "The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa had already set itself the goal in 2019 of demanding respect for human rights and the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights from all actors in the cocoa supply chain". Since then, this highly regarded topic has been promoted in various working groups of GISCO, but also in cooperation with other initiatives for

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**Geschäftsstelle des Forum Nachhaltiger Kakao e.V.**

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sustainable cocoa in Europe. On the occasion of GISCO's 10th anniversary, Ms Buama stressed: "We are proud of what we have achieved, but we must not rest on our laurels: the next 10 years must now be about making an impact on the ground, and to this end, cooperation with the German government - which is a member of GISCO - our partners on the ground and our partners in Europe is an important key".

Zoe Druilhe, Policy Officer at the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA), explained that the two legislative proposals on the table, the Deforestation-Free Products Regulation and the Due Diligence Directive, will revolutionise the functioning of supply chains. In future, producer countries and importers will have to prove the conformity of their products so that they can continue to sell them on the EU market. The Commission also insisted that for a better, more sustainable product, farmers will deserve a better price.

"In order to counteract unintended effects of the new EU regulations, such as higher costs or lower prices for cocoa farmers," says Michel Arrion, Executive Director of the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO), the governments of the more than 20 cocoa-producing countries in the ICCO should be involved in a broad policy dialogue. The ICCO could provide the platform for this. Aly Touré, Permanent Representative Spokesperson of Cocoa Producing Countries at ICCO, pointed out that massive support for cocoa farmers was necessary to complement the regulations. He called for the courage to talk about higher producer prices.

### **Members agreed: more transparency and more commitment**

During the General Meeting, the representatives from civil society, industry, trade and the federal government also approved two important proposals:

- the commitment of members to participate in the joint monitoring process with the Belgian and Dutch Sustainable Cocoa Initiatives, Beyond Chocolate and DISCO.
- the creation of individual commitments, so-called roadmaps, on the priority topics of traceability, certification, deforestation/agroforestry and child labour.

More transparency about the goals to which members are committed or which are already being implemented will help us to set the right course for a sustainable cocoa sector, said Buama at the end of the event.

The goals of GISCO can be found [here](#).

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**Caption:**

Dr Bärbel Kofler, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) (in the middle of the picture), opened the tenth general meeting of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa. The board welcomed more than 90 members and guests.

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**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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