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International Cocoa Verification Board Announces Organizations to Carry Out Independent Verification of Cocoa Sector Certification

The International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB) announces the formal selection of Fafo AIS and Khulisa Management Services as the agencies charged with carrying out the verification of certification surveys in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. These two agencies will collaborate with in-country organizations Research International (Cote d'Ivoire) and HEDGE (Ghana) to conduct an independent verification process and to make recommendations for strengthening future certification surveys and remediation activities. This verification is a crucial element of fulfilling the Harkin-Engel Protocol and informing policy decisions on the worst forms of child labor and forced adult labor in the cocoa sectors of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana.

The partners, who were selected by the ICVB after a competitive application process, offer a unique multi-national team, involving experts from Europe, Africa and the United States. Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies (Fafo AIS) is a Norwegian-based nonprofit with a longstanding reputation for expertise in data collection and analysis, particularly for populations that are often elusive, such as child laborers. Areas of experience in Africa include West and Central Africa, Child Labor and Vulnerability, and Trafficking and Migration. Fafo AIS has worked with UNICEF, UNDP, World Bank, and ILO, among others, to produce 'research that matters'.

Khulisa Management Services (Khulisa), is a South African-based firm with 14 years experience in monitoring, evaluation, research and data quality auditing in the fields of child labor, education and public health across numerous African countries. Khulisa's clients include the US Department of Labor (USDOL), US Agency for International Development (USAID), UNICEF, the US State Department, Global Fund, the European Union and others. Khulisa's team of ISO 9001-certified auditors will participate in the assessment activities. In-country organizations Research International (Cote d'Ivoire) and HEDGE (Ghana) will also play a key role in engaging with cocoa producing communities during the representative sample stage of the verification. Together these organizations have the technical, local and cultural capacities to conduct a rigorous verification process, which they will accomplish in two main stages:

First, an assessment of the certification data collection activities will be carried out in the two countries. This activity will include an assessment of the research objectives and outcomes, the examination of suitability of research techniques, conducting a data quality assessment (DQA) and an assessment of the data analysis and output quality (results).

Then a representative sample survey will be carried out in the two countries. This will include the creation of a representative sampling design, instrument (questionnaire) development, pilot testing, training, data collection and analysis and report writing.

Based on this approach, an overall synthesis and verification report will be presented, with a particular emphasis on ways to improve future certification surveys and the remediation efforts (both in the public and private sectors) that they inform. Their distinct partnership also allows for an internal peer review process of the data analysis and a final report that fully synthesizes the contributions and observations of the various agencies.

The ICVB made contractual arrangements with the verifiers that allowed them to begin the verification activities in April, prior to the actual signing of contract in May. The Governments of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire have acted quickly in granting the verifiers the required permissions and the first phase of in-country work is already underway.

For more information regarding the ICVB, please visit www.cocoaverification.net. This site will soon feature an interactive tool that will allow stakeholders worldwide to offer feedback directly to the ICVB.

About the ICVB

The International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB) was convened in December, 2007. This multi-stakeholder body includes nine representatives from NGOs, academia, trade unions and industry. The nine Board members are: Anthony Fofie, Ghana Cocoa Board; Amouan Assouan Acquah, Special Counselor to the Prime Minister (Cote d'Ivoire); Stephen Ayidiya, University of Ghana-Legon; Andrews Adoquaye Tagoe, General Agricultural Workers Union (Ghana); Alice Koiho Kipre, Afrique Secours et Assistance (Cote d'Ivoire); Diane Mull, International Initiative on Exploitive Child Labor (USA); John Trew, CARE International (USA); Jeff Morgan, Mars, Inc. (USA); and Isabelle Adam, European Cocoa Association (Belgium). www.cocoaverification.net