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Verité CONVENES CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE CHILD
LABOR IN WEST AFRICAN COCOA FARMING
BRINGING TOGETHER NGOS, INDUSTRY, UNIONS AND ACADEMICS TO EXAMINE
INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION OF COCOA FARMS IN GHANA AND CoTE D'IVOIRE

London, UK Verité, the US-based nonprofit that provides solutions to labor abuses worldwide through innovative corporate social responsibility, is convening another landmark one-day consultative meeting called "Why Verify? Making Cocoa Verification Count," in London, UK, to assist in the process of eliminating the worst forms of child labor and forced adult labor in the West African cocoa industry through independent verification of the certification effort of the Harkin Engel Protocol. The meeting on March 31, 2008, is the second consultative meeting hosted by Verité that brings stakeholders together to create a transparent, effective and credible verification process. This initiative to eliminate the worst forms of child labor and forced adult labor in cocoa farming began in 2001 with the Harkin-Engel Protocol and has accelerated with the newly-formed International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB) called for in Verité's Road Map. Verité is acting as the interim Secretariat of the ICVB.

Representatives from several African NGOs, the International Labor Organization, UNICEF, Global Witness, Anti-Slavery International, trade unions, academics and many others are joining with representatives from the global cocoa industry to collaboratively discuss the challenges to independent verification and ways to strengthen this effort. We expect this robust dialog to result in stronger and more credible verification. The question remains, however, "Why verify"?

Information gathered during the surveys has already resulted in improvements for the National Plans to Combat Child Labor in both Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire but to ensure a fully transparent process the need for independent verification remains. The greater goal of verification is to ensure that these groundbreaking nationwide efforts to assess and improve conditions on the ground are robust and that remediation efforts are based on accurate data that is effectively targeted.

Attendees will hear directly from the top government officials who have conducted the surveys that assess the impact the Harkin Engel Protocol has on their countries. NGO panelists will address the work that they are doing on the front lines of efforts to combat child trafficking, the ways this effort impact their work and the very real need to ensure that the independent verifiers use child-centered interview techniques in their work.

Results from this meeting will provide input for the next ICVB meeting on April 3 and 4, 2008, when the Board will select verifiers. Independent verifiers will be in the fields for the first time

beginning in May, 2008. This is the crucial next step in the larger effort to identify and remediate the Worst Forms of Child Labor nationwide in both Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.

To register for "Why Verify? Making Cocoa Verification Count," please fill out the brief registration form and return it to aroscoe@verite.org by March 17.

Keynote Speakers at the meeting are Mme. Amouan Assouan Acquah, Special Counselor to the Prime Minister of Cote d'Ivoire and member of the ICVB, and Mme. Akosua Frema Osei-Opare, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment and Member of Parliament of Ghana.

Other speakers include Evelyne Adom of Afrique Secours et Assistance, Cote d'Ivoire; Anita Sheth, Senior Analyst, Advocacy, Policy & Research of Save the Children Canada; Jeff Morgan, Director of Global Programs, Mars, Inc. and member of the ICVB; Franciska Isaaka, Founder, CENSUDI, The Centre for Sustainable Development Initiatives, Ghana; and Thodore S ka, President, RENFCAP, a Leading Capacity Building and Child Rights NGO, Cote d'Ivoire.

The conference will take place in the Exeter Suite of the Strand Palace Hotel.

For reservations or directions contact:

The Strand Palace Hotel

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About Verité

Verité ensures that people worldwide work under healthy, safe, fair and legal conditions and provides solutions to labor abuses worldwide through innovative corporate social responsibility. Verité works in over 60 countries to empower companies, factories, NGOs, governments, and workers to create sustainable workplace practices in the factories and communities where our consumer goods are made.

In 2007 Verité was awarded one of ten Skoll Awards for Social Entrepreneurship and named a Social Capitalist Award winner by Fast Company magazine/Monitor Group, having been recognized as one of the top organizations able to "translate their vision into action, and meet the harsh market standards of performance and accountability." For more information visit www.verite.org