

## **MY SPEECH AT THE CEREMONY TO LAUNCH THE CHILD PROTECTION PARTNERSHIP (CPC) IMPLEMENTATION**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am particularly pleased to be with you today at this ceremony to launch the implementation of the Partnership for Child Protection (CPC).

I would now like to welcome Jessica Davis Ba, US Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, whom I thank for her personal implication in the implementation of this partnership.

I would also like to extend my greetings to Mr Bryan Marcus, Deputy Director of the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking, and to the delegation accompanying him, who have come from Washington especially for this event.

I would also like to extend my warmest greetings to the European Union Ambassador, Francesca Di Mauro, who is kind enough to attend this ceremony.

I would also like to greet and thank Mr Georges Bolamo, Deputy Director of the Prime Minister's Cabinet, and Mr Yves Koné Brahima, Managing Director of the Coffee and Cocoa Board for their presence here with us.

I would also like to welcome all the Country Directors and United Nations agencies: ILO, UNICEF and our partners: World Cocoa Foundation, Save the Children International, ICI Foundation and IRC, as well as all our national and international NGO partners.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Adama Kamara, Minister of Employment and Social Protection and Chairman of the Interministerial Committee to Combat Child Trafficking, Exploitation and Labor (CIM).

My warmest greetings also go to all the national and international experts gathered here. I want to thank you for your personal commitment in the fight against child trafficking, exploitation and labor in our country.

Finally, my greetings go to the press, who play a vital role in disseminating information about the country's effort to combat child labor.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On December 7, 2022, in this very room, we signed the Child Protection Partnership (CPC) between the United States of America and Côte d'Ivoire. Today, I am delighted to launch of the implementation of phase of our agreement, which will enable Côte d'Ivoire to step up its efforts in the fight against human trafficking, particularly with regard to children and young girls, thanks to funding from the US Government.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The issue of child protection has always been at the heart of my concerns. As you know, child labor is a global issue, and our country is unfortunately no exception.

And for several years now, we have been fighting relentlessly against the trafficking, exploitation and child labor within our borders, to eradicate this phenomenon.

I would like to remind you that the President of the Republic created two committees by decree in 2011 to combat this scourge.

The Interministerial Committee to Combat Child Trafficking, Exploitation and Labor (CIM), which steers government action. It is chaired by the Minister of Employment and Social Protection, Adama Kamara, and its Vice-President, Ms Nassénéba Touré.

And the National Oversight Committee for Actions against Child Trafficking, Exploitation and Labor (CNS), which evaluates and coordinates all projects to address child labor in the country, and which I have the honor of chairing.

In addition to these two committees, in 2017, the President of the Republic also created by decree, the National Committee for the Fight against Human Trafficking (CNLTP), to take care of adult victims of human trafficking. This third committee is chaired by the Prime Minister, Mr Patrick Achi, the the Minister for Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Madame Myss Belmonde Dogo is the Executive Secretary.

Concerning the national legislation, Côte d'Ivoire has also taken steps to punish the perpetrators of human trafficking and protect the victims. New laws have been adopted. These include

- the law of September 30, 2010 prohibiting trafficking and the worst forms of child labor,
- the law of December 8, 2016 on the fight against human trafficking,
- and the law of June 13, 2018 on the suppression of migrant smuggling.

Still on the subject of repression, six special police brigad responsible for close surveillance throughout the national territory have been created in 2019, in order to apprehend traffickers.

Thanks to the implementation of these legal and regulatory provisions, from 2012 to date, more than 200,000 vulnerable children and victims of trafficking and exploitation have been rescued, and more than 1,000 child traffickers have been arrested, brought to court and prosecuted.

In addition to cracking down on traffickers, the protection and care of trafficked children is a priority action for our committees.

It is for this reason that the Children of Africa Foundation has built three reception centers in Soubré in the west of Côte d'Ivoire, Ferkéssédougou in the north and Bouaké in the center to take in trafficked children in distress and provide them with the support, guidance and care they need to re-socialize.

In terms of prevention, Côte d'Ivoire has made schooling compulsory from age 6 to 16, and the Ivorian government and its partners have also built thousands of classrooms to keep children as far away as possible from the risk of exploitation.

We are also continuing our regular public awareness campaigns, to involve the communities in our collective efforts to combat child exploitation.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The particular situation we are facing requires vigorous and permanent action on our part to overcome it, but above all strong cooperation between governments. It is for this reason that we have signed cooperation agreements to combat cross-border trafficking.

In this respect, I signed cooperation agreements in 2011 with the First Lady of Mali, in 2013 with the First Lady of Burkina Faso and in 2016 with the First Lady of Ghana, to enable us to join forces and combine our efforts, particularly in the fight against cross-border child trafficking.

In 2017, to foster a concerted and collaborative approach at state level, I also took the initiative of organizing a conference in Abidjan that brought together 14 First Ladies from West Africa and the Sahel to generate a shared commitment to the issue of child trafficking. A global agreement was signed between all our states to combat this scourge.

All these measures are implemented in the field within the framework of national action plans that enable us to coordinate our actions and ensure the convergence of our initiatives for more effective results.

Unfortunately, the major migratory flows to Côte d'Ivoire in recent years have made it difficult to manage our actions in the field. We receive large numbers of families from neighboring countries.

And this situation is slowing down our efforts and joint initiatives to combat child labor in our sub-region.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are aware that much remains to be done. This is why I would like to welcome today the implementation of this partnership, which marks the beginning of effective cooperation between the United States of America and Côte d'Ivoire to protect our children.

To this end, I would like to thank Mr Bryan Marcus, Deputy Director of the US State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism and Trafficking in Persons, and the delegation accompanying him.

At the same time, I would like to congratulate all those involved in implementing this project, and thank the US State Department for the \$10 million in funding that has been granted.

I also look forward to the study to be carried out in the coming weeks by the University of Massachusetts Lowell, which will provide us with a more accurate mapping and figures on human trafficking in our country, so that we can address an appropriate response.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Save The Children, which has been selected to implement the programs under the Child Protection Pact. I encourage the teams to work together with all stakeholders to ensure the success of this partnership between the United States of America and Côte d'Ivoire.

With these words, I declare the implementation of the joint action plan of the Child Protection Compact partnership launched.

Thank you very much.