

**SPEECH BY THE FIRST LADY DURING THE SIGNING CEREMONY  
OF THE NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION TO COMBAT CHILD  
LABOR IN COCOA PRODUCTION IN COTE D'IVOIRE AND GHANA**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am particularly pleased to be here with you this afternoon, for the signing of the new framework for action between Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, the United States and the Cocoa and Chocolate Industry, in the fight against child labor in cocoa farming.

First of all, I would like to welcome all the members of the government who are here with us at this ceremony.

I would particularly like to thank Mr Adama Kamara, Minister of Employment and Social Protection, Chairman of the Interministerial Committee for the Fight against Child Trafficking, Exploitation and Labour, and Mrs Nassénéba Touré, Minister of Women, the Family and Children, Vice-Chairwoman of the same committee, for their personal implication in the fight against child labour in our country.

I also welcome Mr. Kacou Léon ADOM, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Ivorians Living Abroad, who is with us this afternoon to show his support in our efforts to address child labor.

I would also like to welcome Mrs Myss Belmonde Dogo, Minister of National Cohesion, Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, and Executive

Secretary of the National Committee for the Fight against Human Trafficking, who is also with us.

I would now like to greet the Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions accredited to Côte d'Ivoire, who have come to show us their support for this important ceremony.

I would particularly like to welcome the various stakeholders who have signed this agreement, namely the United States, represented by Mrs Jessica Davis Ba, Ambassador of the United States, representing Mrs Thea Lee, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Labor Affairs at USDOL.

I'd like to ask you to convey our thanks to her for the warm message she has sent us.

I would also like to greet Mr. Daouda Ibrahima, representing the Honorable Ignatus Baffour Awuah, Ghana's Minister of Employment and Labor Relations, and the entire delegation from Ghana. Thank you for your much-appreciated presence.

I would also like to welcome Mr Chris Vincent, Chairman of the World Cocoa Foundation, and all the cocoa and chocolate manufacturers who are committed to implementing this new framework for action. I would like to thank them all for attending this ceremony.

I would also like to salute Mr Matthias Lange, Executive Director of the ICI Foundation, whom I thank for his role as facilitator throughout the process that led to the drafting of this framework for action.

I would also like to welcome Mrs Coumba Diop, ILO Country Director. Thank you for your presence.

I would also like to thank the UNICEF and ILO teams for their technical assistance and contribution, as well as all the organizations of the United Nations for supporting our efforts to address the issue.

I would particularly like to welcome Mr Michel Arrion, ICCO Executive Director, who is here with us.

I would also like to greet the members of the prefectural body present here, headed by Mr. Andjou Koua, Prefect of Abidjan, whom I thank for being with us.

I would now like to extend my special greetings and thanks to Mr Yves Brahima Koné, Managing Director of the Coffee and Cocoa Board, for all his efforts to eliminate child labor in our country.

I also salute all the personalities who have honored this ceremony with their presence.

I would not forget to salute the professional organizations of employers and workers, national and international NGOs, civil society organizations, coffee and cocoa producers' cooperative , and the media as well.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The event that brings us together this afternoon marks an important stage in our attempt to better structure of our collective efforts to combat child labor in cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

Indeed, this framework for action, which clarifies the context and defines the prospects for our collaboration, will enable us to respond more effectively to the child labor persistent challenge in the cocoa supply chain in our two countries.

This is a public-private partnership in which Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, the United States and a number of cocoa and chocolate companies combine their efforts and set common performance indicators to measure their progress together.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This new Framework for Action 2024-2029 follows on from that of 2010, and opens up new perspectives for a stronger collective commitment against child labor.

As such, it contains more promising ambitions for all the children involved into child labor, in remote towns, villages and hamlets, and whose future seems to hold no end in sight.

To all these children and adolescents, we want to say that we are with you and intend to honor our commitment to each and every one of them, and to keep them safe from trafficking, exploitation and child labor.

It is with this in mind that we have decided to act together, in a more coordinated way, and to converge our material and financial resources, in order to better combat the phenomenon.

To this end, we will :

- strengthen and extend public and private child labor monitoring systems, as well as cocoa traceability systems, to identify, prevent and remedy this scourge.
- strengthen access to quality education and vocational training for all our children, with particular attention paid to the specific needs of girls, through the construction of classrooms, school canteens, housing for teachers, as well as bridging classes to give out-of-school children a chance to go to school.
- improve access to basic social services for vulnerable populations, notably by extending birth registration and health services.
- We also need to strengthen social protection schemes for self-employed workers, as well as occupational health and safety measures.
- Finally, our priority will also be to help improve cocoa farmers' incomes and support women's empowerment, in order to combat poverty and increase families' economic and financial capacity to meet their household's current expenses.

We also aim to meet the requirements of economic, social and environmental sustainability in the cocoa supply chain, to enable us to support a successful cocoa economy in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Despite our commitment, we remain aware that the task will not be easy, as there are many external factors that could hamper our efforts to achieve our objectives.

These include, for example, the challenge posed by the large-scale migration of vulnerable populations into our countries, mostly women and children, fleeing the terrorist threat in their countries of origin.

This massive population movement carries the risk of increasing the number of children exposed to child labor in cocoa production. This is why we must act urgently and with greater determination, to counter the expansion and spread of child labor in cocoa-producing areas.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At this point, I would like to reiterate my sincere thanks to the cocoa and chocolate companies who have decided to support the implementation of this partnership. There are : Barry Callebaut, Cargill, Ferrero, Guittard Chocolate, Hershey, Lindt, Mars, Mondelēz, Nestlé, Olam, Sucden and Blommer. Thank you, dear partners, for your ongoing commitment to the fight against child labor.

I would also like to thank all our technical and financial partners who are supporting us in this fight, in particular ILO, UNICEF and the ICI Foundation.

Finally, I would like to thank the United States Department of Labor and the Government of Ghana, as well as the World Cocoa Foundation, who are key stakeholders in this joint initiative.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Before I conclude, I would like to make a solemn appeal to all the players in the cocoa value chain to join us in this fight against child labor, because the well-being and development of children lies in our responsibility to take the right decisions together for their future.

I remain convinced that it is only by working together that we will succeed in eradicating child labor in the cocoa production chain in a sustainable way.

Thank you all very much.