

## **Speech by Iain Walker, British High Commissioner to Ghana**

- Mr. Chairman, Her ladyship, former Chief Justice Georgina Wood
- Your Excellency President Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo-Addo;
- Distinguished Representatives of Government and Civil Society
- Your Excellencies, Members of other Missions and the Diplomatic Corps;
- Representatives of Public and Private Institutions
- Representatives of Invited NGOs and Think Tanks
- Development Partners
- Members of the Press Corps
- Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the UK government, I am extremely grateful to the organisers for allowing me to make some solidarity remarks at such an important event.

The UK is at the centre of the world's efforts on climate change and reducing greenhouse gases. In 2015, the UK committed to spend at least £5.8bn of International Climate Finance (ICF) over 2016 - 2021. A key pillar of this commitment is supporting growth and trade that uses natural resources sustainably, and promotes stability by

enhancing the benefits to all from biodiversity, land, water and forests.

UK companies lead the way in setting private sector standards for producing, trading and sourcing agricultural commodities and timber. The Prince of Wales' International Sustainability Unit is an important convenor, bringing together CEOs, Ministers and NGO leaders regularly to drive change.

The UK and Ghana have historically found a strong and mutually beneficial partnership focused on growing trade and commercial links on sustainable forestry and with agricultural sector. This has led to positive outcomes for both of our economies and sustainable environmental impacts. We have a shared vision where we work together to protect and manage our climate and forests for future generations.

Ghana's forests make a vital contribution to the economy representing 6% of GDP, employing more than 100,000

people, support the livelihoods of 2.5 million people, and generating important export revenues. This is irreplaceable, and we must act now to ensure that it is sustainable.

Ghana's annual deforestation rate is running at 3.2%, accounting for nearly 140,000 ha of the High Forest Zone (HFZ) each year.

Ghana's forests are under severe threat from agricultural expansion and illegal mining. Over a quarter of the deforestation is driven by cocoa, making it the single biggest driver of deforestation. This has impacts on the livelihoods of the 12 million Ghanaians living in this zone. Its impact affects us all. A comprehensive response is needed to address this.

Through a timber trade agreement signed with the EU, Ghana is working to strengthen compliance with its environmental safeguards and tackle illegal logging as a

driver of deforestation. Since 2005, through support from the UK, Ghana is putting in place systems to verify that all timber harvested for both domestic and international markets, is coming from verified legal sources. Through this approach, this 'Voluntary Partnership Agreement' ensures that only companies meeting the required social, environmental and economic obligations, will be allowed to sell timber on either local or international markets.

This builds on many decades of working in collaboration together with the institutions tasked with the management and the regulation of the forestry sector

Alongside this, is our work on cocoa. Poverty faced by farmers is a pervasive problem in the cocoa supply chain, child labour remains a serious risk, and illegal deforestation is happening with alarming speed. It is tragic that the production of chocolate, a luxury product craved across the entire world, is associated with such misery and destruction.

It cannot continue.

Together, we now have an opportunity to drive reform, make real changes to the way land and resources are managed, and in the way all stakeholders – farmers, companies, governments and civil society – engage in the production of cocoa.

The Cocoa and Forests Initiative launched in London in March, with the support of HRH The Prince of Wales, offers an important opportunity to bring about change across the cocoa sectors in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire.

The UK Government strongly welcomes this initiative, and the underlying commitment to end deforestation which has been set out by cocoa and chocolate companies. There are now 35 companies, representing the vast majority of the industry, which have agreed to this goal.

I also strongly welcome the leadership shown by the government of Ghana in working with the industry and civil

society to develop a joint framework for action to end deforestation in the cocoa supply chain. However, it will not succeed without government support and political leadership, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Ghana directly for your support and leadership on this vital global issue.

I'm pleased that the UK has been able to support the start-up of the Cocoa and Forests Initiative through the Partnerships for Forests, a programme established to support economic growth and livelihoods, while meeting growing demand for sustainable agricultural commodities.

I urge you to build on the early momentum and agree an ambitious joint framework for action at the Climate Change Conference of Parties 23 in Bonn in November.

Public commitments made by the industry at the launch of the Cocoa and Forests Initiative in March marked an important first step. But this means nothing without

implementation, turning commitments into action that leads to positive change on the ground.

Today's inauguration marks the start of an important partnership which will demonstrate how to do just that.

The Partnership for Productivity, Protection, and Resilience in the Cocoa Landscape will develop and pilot a landscape-wide governance framework in the Juabeso-Bia landscape in the Western region to protect forests in collaboration with communities, provide farm-level support to 60,000 cocoa farmers to improve their livelihoods by increasing productivity in an environmentally sustainable manner, and develop incentive mechanisms for communities and cocoa farmers to sustain this over time.

The partnership also seeks to test a deforestation-free cocoa business model, with the aim of catalysing and pooling additional private sector investment within the

landscape to scale-up and replicate it in other cocoa landscapes in Ghana and the region.

The partners in this initiative – Touton, Ghana COCOBOD and the Forestry Commission, Agro Eco, Nature Conservation Research Centre and SNV – are showing key leadership on this important issue.

I'm proud and pleased that the UK can support you on this venture, through our Partnerships for Forests programme.

Through this programme, the UK is working with companies like Touton, which are committed to driving a more sustainable approach in the cocoa and chocolate industry, mobilising early action in support of the aims of the Cocoa and Forests Initiative.

I hope that the innovative approaches developed through this partnership – and others like it – will rapidly be adopted as the new norm by the industry, and replicated at scale, as



companies move rapidly to implement their commitments to halt deforestation.

Success in achieving a sustainable cocoa sector would set Ghana in a position of global leadership, demonstrating that it is possible to promote sustainable economic development and protect forests.

This would mark an important milestone in global efforts to realise the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement targets on climate change.

The UK stands ready to help make this happen. I wish you success in this ambitious and exciting venture.