



**GENERAL STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN COCOA ASSOCIATION (ECA)
ON THE ALLEGED USE OF SLAVES BY COCOA PRODUCERS IN THE IVORY COAST**

19 APRIL 2001

The European Cocoa Association represents companies from across the entire cocoa industry. Its members are involved in the cocoa bean trade, in warehousing and other related logistical activities. Some ECA member companies grind and process cocoa beans into cocoa liquor from which cocoa powder and cocoa butter are produced. Members of the ECA also produce industrial chocolate. Altogether, its founding members represent 75% of the cocoa industry in Europe.

ECA is aware of certain allegations regarding the use of slavery on cocoa plantations in the Ivory Coast. These claims raise a grave issue and deserve very careful consideration.

Over a million farms across the Ivory Coast produce an average of one tonne of cocoa beans every year. These small shipments are subsequently transported, stored and finally processed in large quantities. As a result, the cocoa bean supply chain encompasses vast numbers of people and organisations of many different sizes and purposes.

ECA members conform to ethical practices in their operations, which clearly include those in the Ivory Coast. The vast majority of farmers in the Ivory Coast are law abiding with a well-developed code of conduct and we are concerned about the potential impact of these allegations on their livelihood.

ECA is fully committed to sustainable development in cocoa producing countries and does not tolerate practices such as slavery and child labour. ECA remains fully committed to maintain pressure on the relevant authorities, and to pursue all avenues in order to eradicate such practices where they are proven to occur.

In this context, ECA is greatly encouraged by the initiative recently announced by the Ivory Coast President, Laurent Gbagbo, to enforce prohibition of child labour in the country and to submit draft legislation to the Parliament in three weeks with a view to ratifying the ILO Conventions on Worst Forms of Child Labour and Minimum Age.

European Cocoa Association, aisbl – ECA
Avenue de Cortenbergh 118 box 8 – B – 1000 Brussels – Belgium
Tel. + 32 2 737 95 75 – Fax 32 2 737 95 74
Email: info@cocoa-eu.com
Bank Account: BBL 310-1390398-86