

STATEMENT BY HON. KWADWO BAAH -WIREDU, MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC PLANNING, AT THE SIGNING CEREMONY OF CONTRACTS UNDER THE COCOA ROADS IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (CRIP), 29TH JANUARY, 2007 AT THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC PLANNING

COLLEAGUE MINISTERS, CONTRACTORS,
INVITED GUESTS, MEMBERS OF THE PRESS,
DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN .

1. Permit me to express my profound gratitude to all of you gathered here this afternoon to witness the signing ceremony of the Cocoa Roads Improvement Project (CRIP), the first of its kind in the history of Ghana, being implemented by Government in collaboration with Ghana Cocoa Board with the Department of Feeder Roads as the implementing agency.
2. It is indeed a great achievement that the signing ceremony is taking place shortly after it was announced by His Excellency the President at this year's People's Assembly which took place in Takoradi on 11th January, 2008. The Procurement Procedures of selected roads under this first phase has been completed and a total of 205km of roads have been awarded to 30 contractors in the six cocoa growing regions at an estimated contract sum of GH¢25.2 million.
3. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted at this juncture to mention some of the achievements of this Government in the cocoa industry. Since the current administration assumed office, we have in collaboration with Ghana Cocoa Board put in place measures aimed at increasing production.
4. These initiatives have impacted positively on the ordinary cocoa farmer and the economy in general and have led to continuous improvements in the cocoa industry. Farmers' earnings have also improved significantly by way of increased output thereby improving the quality of life of the cocoa farmer and simultaneously, reducing poverty.
5. Among the policy initiatives in the cocoa industry vigorously pursued by Government over the period include:
 - i. Remunerative producer prices and payment of bonuses which have been paid SIX (6) times since 2001;
 - ii. Effective Diseases and Pest Control Exercise;
 - iii. Improving the agronomic practices on our cocoa farms;
 - iv. Increased value addition to cocoa;

- v. Introduction of new and innovative methods of cocoa farming;
 - vi. Improving the infrastructural base of the industry; and
 - vii. Sustained Scholarships to wards of cocoa farmers in second cycle institutions whose number currently stands at about 7,500.
6. This Administration will continue to give all the needed support to the cocoa sector to ensure that it achieves its maximum potential. The implementation of this first phase of the Cocoa Roads Improvement Project (CRIP) under which the contract signing ceremony is being carried out today is one such initiative.
 7. Government will thus continue to put in place policies and measures that will enrich the lives of the ordinary cocoa farmer and farmers in general. This is in view of the enormous contribution of the cocoa sub-sector to the general economy of Ghana in terms of its contribution to the growth of GDP, foreign exchange earnings, and poverty reduction among others.
 8. We believe that this project when completed will facilitate the efficiency of cocoa evacuation in the cocoa producing areas as well as facilitate the movement of People and food crops in these areas.
 9. An increased efficiency of evacuation of cocoa will not only benefit the farmer but also most players in the cocoa industry especially the hauliers and Licenced Buying Companies in terms of the impact that this measure will have on their recycling rate/ funds turn over.
 10. Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen I would like to draw attention to COCOBOD's decision to also increase the bad road factor from 20% to 30% and the return factor from 20% to 25% for hauliers of cocoa. These are all measures aimed at improving upon the internal marketing of cocoa.
 11. On this fine note, ladies and gentlemen, I need not elaborate on the overall impact of CRIP. I wish, however, to seize the opportunity to encourage investors to explore the market potential of the beneficiary communities in terms of the opening up of these communities to the marketing centres and also to the major cities of the country by way of CRIP and other related project.
 12. Permit me to advise Contractors who will be involved in this project to do a good job and on time because the Ministry will come tough on contractors who do poor work. We should all remember that good work pays and therefore the Ministry expects nothing but the best.
 13. Mr. Chairman, ladies and Gentlemen,
 14. Thank you for your kind attention.