

ADDRESS BY AMBASSADOR HOPE SONA EBAL, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COCOA PRODUCERS' ALLIANCE (COPAL) AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING PRECEDING THE SECOND SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATES AND GOVERNMENTS OF AFRICAN COCOA PRODUCING COUNTRIES.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER,

ACCRA, GHANA
3RD SEPTEMBER, 2007.

The Honorable Minister of Finance and Economic Planning
of the Republic of Ghana,

Your Excellencies, Ministers in charge of Cocoa from the
African cocoa producing countries here present,

Your Excellencies, Members of Government of the
Republic of Ghana,

The Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board. Your
Royal Highnesses, keepers of our tradition and culture,

The Chairman of the National Organizing Committee for the Summit,

Eminent Scientists and Technocrats in charge of cocoa,
Distinguished invited Guests, ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure and I am indeed honored to take the floor on behalf of the Cocoa Producers' Alliance to say a few words on behalf of the Cocoa Producers' Alliance during this opening ceremony of the Ministerial meeting preceding the Second African Cocoa Summit.

I bring you the salutations of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers , Chief Charles Ugwu, Minister of Commerce and Industry of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as well as the very best wishes from the entire staff of the Secretariat in Lagos Nigeria.

Let me begin my address by telling you about the courtesy call made by the Council of Ministers of COP AL to then President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2002 on the occasion of the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the creation of COPAL.

The Chairman of Council conducted his colleague Ministers to Aso Rock and after the diplomatic pleasantries gave an account of the deliberations of the Council and the activities planned for the celebrations.

I was then called upon to give Mr. President a very brief synopsis of the world cocoa economy so I decided to limit myself to the market fundamentals.

I noticed during my statement that he started to get uncomfortable as though he wanted to speak so thinking I was getting a bit long (I have been known to be a bit passionate when I talk cocoa) so I summarized and thanked him for his attention.

I was about to sit down when I heard" Cameroon man, I thank you but you have made two points that should not be said in the same breathe." I quickly jumped in defensively, " I have Sir"

He said" you have told me that COPAL accounts for 75% of the world supply of cocoa beans but you also deplored the steady decline of world market prices for beans in real terms. You have not told me how this is possible neither have you told me what you intend to do about it. Listen, OPEC hardly supplies 60%b of the world's petroleum but when we sneeze the whole world catches a cold".

That was vintage President Obasanjo, a great visionary who thought the Africa being the number one producing zone in the world had to be more pro-active in cocoa matters. Fours years later the first Summit was held under his Chairmanship in Abuja in May 2006.

The theme of the Abuja Summit was" A Sustainable Cocoa Economy for Africa". Ghana has taken over the baton and is our host today with as Summit theme "Defining Policy Roadmap towards a Sustainable cocoa economy for Africa", In this continuum of sustainability we need certain policy guidelines - a road map as we have called to measure progress as we embark on this process.

The World cocoa economy has five principal characteristics:

- acute volatility of prices on the world market translating into strong fluctuations in the prices paid to farmers;
- great geographic concentration in the production and exportation of cocoa with 75% of the world's cocoa coming from West and central Africa;
- Over 90% of this production is in the hands of small holders with an average of 2 hectares;
- increased importance of cocoa as the main ingredient in the manufacture of chocolate but, at the same time its value in the chocolate bar is very minimal (less than 10%)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cocoa has conquered the world through its economic value because of its potential for the creation of wealth,

Cocoa has conquered the world through its social value because of the numerous opportunities for the creation of employment,

Cocoa has conquered the world with its sensation of pleasure and internal well-being because of its aroma and flavor and all the nutritional and health benefits some of which we are only beginning to discover.

Cocoa has conquered the world from the great civilizations of the Mayas and Aztecs of the neso- Americas to the continent of Africa also a continent of great civilizations.

Africa will, in spite of the interests and expansions in Asia and the rehabilitation in the Americas, Africa I was saying will in the medium to long term remain the major producing zone in the world.

This presents great opportunities but also great responsibility;

- responsibility to ensure that supplies are adequate to satisfy today's market needs and mindful to ensure that the precursors for adequate supplies of tomorrows needs are left intact, responsible that those who labor for this much sort sifter crop receive adequate remuneration or in periods when the market is down, receive an equitable portion of the wealth along the cocoa chain, and responsibility in the spread of the goods news on the virtues of cocoa to promote the consumption of cocoa all over the world.

Your Excellencies,

So here we are in Accra, Ghana, Land of great civilization, land of Tetteh Quasie, country synonymous with excellent quality on the on the world cocoa market, for the 2nd African Cocoa Summit.

I have had the opportunity to participate in the preparations of this event and can assure you that all is well.

The National Organizing Committee comprising the Cocobod and an Inter- Ministerial team has toiled to ensure that the ground work has been well done for a successful Summit.

Long Live and Happy Birthday to the Republic of Ghana,

Long Live International cooperation in cocoa matters, so that,

Long Live a sustainable cocoa economy and I thank you for your kind attention.