

Congress of the United States

March 19, 2008

John Claringbould
Chairman
Global Issues Group
c/o Mars Inc.
McLean, VA 22101

Dear Mr. Claringbould:

The Harkin-Engel Protocol has been a positive and important catalyst for change on the important issue of the worst forms of child labor and forced labor in cocoa production. As stated in the Harkin-Engel Protocol, industry has accepted responsibility for developing and implementing a process that ensures that “cocoa beans and their derivative products have been grown and/or processed without any of the worst forms of child labor.” The framework the Protocol established is unprecedented – all parts of a global supply chain working together in a coordinated fashion to address the worst forms of child labor and forced labor in the cocoa growing regions of West Africa.

To that end, we want to state our support for the certification model currently committed to and being implemented by industry. Under the Protocol, industry, in cooperation with the producing country governments, is implementing a process certification that makes available information to inform consumers and stakeholders about the levels of the worst forms of child and forced labor in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire, rather than a product certification. This should include: (1) representative farm level surveys to evaluate labor practices in the region, (2) public reporting of results, (3) a coordinated set of remediation activities to drive change throughout the cocoa sector, (4) a third party, independent verification that information presented by the certification process is credible and transparent and available to the public. In addition, it is our expectation that the industry fully cooperate with Tulane University’s oversight report team on progress made to implement the Harkin-Engel Protocol.

At the same time, we want to urge industry to meet the upcoming July 1, 2008 deadline for certification and independent verification. It is clear that consumers and stakeholders would expect that the certification model be independently, credibly and transparently verified. Nothing could do more to ensure consumers and stakeholders that industry takes its obligations under the protocol seriously than fully meeting this deadline and providing them with the information they need to make informed choices.

Our hope is that the current certification model being used by industry delivers two key attributes that will drive change throughout the cocoa sector – sector-wide coverage and industry-wide participation. We further hope that the certification model, outlined above, both when it covers 50 percent of the cocoa growing sector and ultimately when it reaches 100 percent will have a positive impact on the cocoa farmers and their families within the cocoa sectors of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

Sincerely,



Tom Harkin
Member of Congress



Eliot Engel
Member of Congress