

**ADDRESS BY DR. STEPHEN KWABENA OPUNI, CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
GHANA COCOA BOARD AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE
TECHNICAL COMMITTEES OF THE GHANA COCOA PLATFORM,
MAY 20, 2014, AT FIESTA ROYALE HOTEL - ACCRA**

The National Co-ordinator, Ghana Cocoa Platform
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Fellow Staff of COCOBOD,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege for me to give this address on the occasion of the inauguration of the Technical Committees of the Ghana Cocoa Platform. The inauguration of the Technical Committees marks an important milestone in the operationalization of the Ghana Cocoa Platform.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Cocoa holds a unique position in Ghana's economy. It has long played a crucial role in Ghana's economic development and remains an important source of rural employment. It is also the most important agricultural export crop.

As regulator of Ghana's cocoa industry, we have done our best to ensure that the industry continues to drive the socio-economic development of the country. In spite of our efforts, the industry is beset with numerous challenges such as low farm productivity, pests and diseases, low technology adoption rate, fluctuation of the prices of cocoa beans on the world market, ageing farmer population, ageing trees, smuggling, illegal mining, land tenure problems etc.

As you may be aware, between 1910 and 1977, Ghana was the World leading cocoa producer, a position it has since lost to its neighbour La Cote d'Ivoire.

Those of us in the industry have a duty to try to resolve the challenges in the cocoa industry to ensure that Ghana restores its leadership in the world cocoa economy.

It is for this reason that we are pleased to note that some eminent personalities who have served this country in various capacities have agreed to serve on the Technical Committees of the Ghana Cocoa Platform. Indeed, the composition of the Technical Committees reflects the dynamics of Ghana's cocoa industry. Ghana's cocoa industry is privileged to have such high caliber of people as members of the Technical Committees. We are confident that your rich track record and experience will be the tools needed to drive an effective implementation of the Ghana cocoa Platform.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate all of you for your appointment as Technical committee members.

I entreat you to develop practical steps and strategies which will ensure that the Ghana Cocoa Platform develop action plans which will address the fundamental challenges confronting our cocoa industry.

I will further challenge you to be creative and introduce some innovations to make the programme a perfect model of public-private partnership. As you deliver your mandate, be guided by transparency and adhere to the terms of reference. Let us all consider this as a national duty towards the promotion of a sustainable cocoa industry in Ghana.

Let me assure you of our fullest support and co-operation. We will urge the Platform Secretariat to provide you with all the necessary logistics and incentives to facilitate your work.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I now have the singular honour to declare the Technical Committees of the Ghana Cocoa Platform duly inaugurated.

Thank you.