

African Approach to Addressing Global Warming and Climate Change: Cocoa, The Unsung Mollifier

Joseph Boahen Aidoo (Ghana)

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SUMMARY

The world is at the decision tipping point to prevent rising global warming and consequential climate change. Anthropogenic activities especially the burning of fossil fuels are a major contributor. Lessons are rife about how the effect of climate change can disrupt and disintegrate even the best of designs, planning, and implementation of projects, programmes, economies and development. Climate action lines are two, namely, to reduce and to remove emissions. Reducing the rate of emission or removal of emissions, call for global collective effort with common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in accordance with the principle of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), implying the industrialized countries that are responsible for a greater greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions must bear a greater share of the cost, and to support the developing countries that contribute less emissions and have little finance. Whereas the industrialized climate finance support for the weaker actors in this global effort has not been forthcoming or come as non-concessional loans, the industrialized countries have set off on an exclusive path and making strides in CO₂ mitigation programmes. The European Union and the United Kingdom, for example, are spending billions of pounds and euros in CO₂ removal, transportation and storage in geological formations aimed at achieving a net zero-CO₂ in 2050. What are the developing countries, and for that matter Africa doing in the climate change action? Africa's production is basically from agriculture and mining, and is bound for the industrialized countries. It is a dependent economy that makes it inevitable to destroy the local environment to be able to feed the industrialized world. That is no excuse for Africa to shirk its responsibility in climate change action. Therefore, the EU regulation on deforestation-free products (EUDR) and effective January 2025, has placed cocoa and other five products (beef, coffee, oil palm, rubber and soy) under mandatory due diligence risk assessment to prevent importation of deforestation products into EU member countries. Cocoa is the mainstay of the economies of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire and the chief source of foreign earnings. The two countries supply 60% of the

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world's cocoa beans production. To say that the regulation will bite their economies is to say the least. But is cocoa a problem? This presentation holds a contrary view. Cocoa, *Theobroma cacao*, is a tropical forest tree, and since forests constitute one of the critical areas for CO₂ extraction and storage, the role of cocoa thereof cannot be overemphasized. It will be demonstrated in this presentation that the cultivation of cocoa in Ghana has enhanced forest cover, preserved forests and protected biodiversity and forest ecosystems. The traditional practices in cocoa farming of old may have their rough edges but still guaranteed the forest regime. Practices of today, which are anchored on regenerative agroforestry and vertical productivity enhancement, even make cocoa cultivation a better and a more effective climate mitigation measure. It will also be demonstrated in this presentation that not only is cocoa an enabler of forest restoration and environmental protection, but it is a superfood, rich in unparalleled health and nutritional benefits for humans. The cocoa in your chocolate is not just an elixir for treat but serves two important purposes – human health and the health of planet earth!

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