

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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African Union Nutrition Champion, His Majesty King Letsie III calls on leaders to put in place practical and sustainable financing mechanisms to deliver improved nutrition outcomes.

The two-day High-Level Dialogue on Nutrition Financing which started on 23 March, set out to review initiatives on private sector engagement, unpack the role of the private sector plans in innovative financing for nutrition on the continent and assess accountability in resource allocation as well as Parliamentarians' oversight of budget allocation.

Speaking during the occasion, His Majesty King Letsie III said "It is my sincerest hope that this dialogue will deliver fruitful outcomes that will bring us closer to eliminating malnutrition, in all its forms, on our beloved continent. I believe wholeheartedly, that this goal can be achieved if we can, among other things, put in place practical and sustainable financing mechanisms that will deliver improved nutrition outcomes for our people."

While acknowledging the progress made at the continental level as far as meeting nutrition targets, especially the Abidjan declaration, the King further called on joint efforts on the part of all stakeholders. "I would, however, like to emphasize that joint efforts, of monumental proportions, bringing together governments, development partners, parliamentarians, traditional leaders, private sector, and civil society, are needed to achieve the progress we all strive for in nutrition financing and in elevating nutrition to a higher level on both the continental and domestic agendas."

Speaking during the opening ceremony, Rt. Hon. Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho said it was only in January this year when they gathered in Dakar, Senegal for the Dakar II Summit Feed Africa-Food Sovereignty and Resilience, saying it was in the same summit where a platform was set for governments and development partners to work diligently on compacts that will transform agriculture across Africa. "Today, as we meet again under the leadership of His Majesty King Letsie III, Head of State of this Kingdom and the African Union Champion on Nutrition for the term 2022-2024, we are only continuing a journey that shall see Africa feed itself and become a breadbasket for the World," he said.

He further stressed the fact that Nutrition was core to the health, well-being, and economic development of the continent and could no longer be regarded as a food production issue because it involved every sector within the food systems value chain.

Speaking on behalf of African Union Commission, H.E. Ambassador Minata Samaté Cessouma, the African Union Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development, while noting the key role of nutrition and the importance of continuing with the implementation of the nutrition road map. "If we are not together, we cannot resolve malnutrition, we will still have stunted children on the continent," said Ambassador Minata Samaté Cessouma.

The Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development was equally keen on the role of the private sector in ensuring nutrition targets are met. "The private sector should not only have in mind benefits. They have to bear in mind it is not all about profit but also about a healthy population. We need to take into consideration the health of our population. We need partners to comment on the Abidjan Declaration Road map. We need the partners to equally support the African Union in implementing the Abidjan declaration. If we are not together, we cannot resolve malnutrition, we will still have stunted children on the continent." She said.

The event provided an opportunity to present available evidence, lessons on resourcing, and discuss strategies as well as initiatives across sectors that could accelerate the positive transformation of Africa's food systems and significantly reduce malnutrition and food insecurity on the continent. It culminated in a call to action for increased investments in nutrition across health; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); education; food; and social protection systems, as well as for better food systems, and nutrition governance and accountability.

African Union Commission and Nutrition International also launched of Adolescent Nutrition Campaign "She'll Grow into It (SGII)" which is a call for action advocacy for the Prioritization of Adolescent Nutrition in AU Member States

The meeting concluded with the adoption of a call to action which called for among others, prioritization of investment in nutrition to accelerate Africa economic transformation and attainment of agenda 2063 objectives and the Implementation of Abidjan Declaration "Accelerate investment, implementation and coordination to improve nutrition and food security in Africa".

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