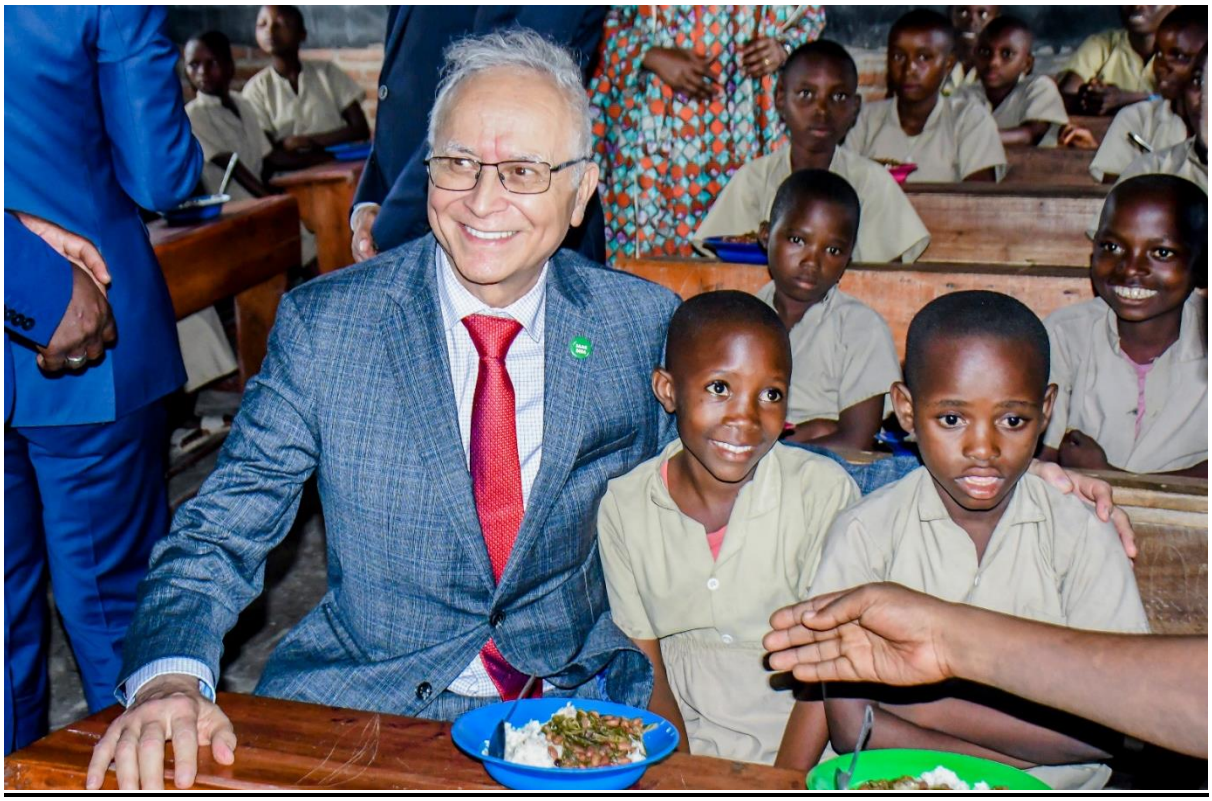
INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: 000003456/2024 **Date: 4 March 2024**
Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

9th African Day of School Feeding

AU Member States exhorted to increase investment in home-grown school feeding



As part of the roadmap's implementation of Education as the AU Theme of 2024, the African Union marked the commemoration of its 9th African Day of School Feeding (ADSF) on 1st March 2024. It was gracefully hosted in Bujumbura, by the Government of the Republic of Burundi, with the technical and financial assistance of the World Food Programme (WFP) and the AUC. This 9th edition's motto was: "*Investing in Home Grown School Feeding to transform education systems - for an inclusive, and prosperous future of the African Continent*".

Under the distinguished patronage of the President of the Republic of Burundi, H.E. Évariste Ndayishimiye, the event brought together H.E the 1st Lady of Burundi, Mrs. H.E Angeline Ndayishimiye in her capacity as the country's School Meals Champion, H.E Prof. Mohammed Belhocine, ESTI/AUC Commissioner and more than 25 African Members states delegations among them a Minister of State, Ministers, Secretaries of States and other high-ranking delegates. In attendance were also representatives from Regional Economic Commissions (RECs), top-ranking officials and representatives of different international organizations, including the World Food Programme (WFP), the African Development Bank, United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

In his opening address, H.E. Évariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi, thanked the African Union for selecting his country to host the 9th ADSF. Acknowledging the endorsement of education as the AU Theme of the year 2024, the President of the Republic of Burundi indicated that it is the cornerstone for the socio-economic growth of nations worldwide. He called for the establishment of conducive environments that take into consideration the cognitive and physiological needs of learners. In line with this requirement, he said his government tripled the budget allocated to home-grown school feeding for the 2023-2024 period. H.E. President Ndayishimiye committed to intensify efforts as far as resources make it possible, as he believed home-grown school feeding to be a profitable investment to shape a bright future to the Youth.

On behalf of the African Union Commission, Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (AUC/ESTI), H.E. Prof. Mohammed Belhocine, expressed his appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Burundi and WFP for supporting the African Union successfully organizing the 9th ADSF. Speaking of the 2024 AU Theme of the Year, H.E. Prof. Belhocine explained that the implementation of the Education roadmap will help AU Member States meet CESA 16-25 and SDGs. He stressed that there is need to allocate 20% of national budgets to the education agenda and ensure that domestic financing continue to be the primary funding source for home-grown school feeding. AUC/ESTI Commissioner therefore urged AU Member States to prioritize investment in Home-Grown school feeding through acute policies and strategies, as well as multisectoral collaboration.

WFP Executive Director, Mrs. Cindy McCain, delivered a video message, saluting AU's decision to declare 2024 the Year of Education, as a powerful commitment for African children well-being and future. She underscored the importance of school feeding programmes, as they help provide school meals to children so that they can nourish their minds and bodies. She engaged all stakeholders to step up partnership with concrete plans, as well as sustainable financing and closer collaboration, to meet child development and education.

Similarly, Ms. Cristina Duarte, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General for Africa (OSAA), declared through a video message: ''we need quick wins and interventions with a high multiplier effect. This is what school feeding programmes bring to the table. Beside the traditional dimensions, increased schooling rates, gender parity, nutrition and health prevention, HGSF programmes can be re-conceptualized to play a multisectoral entry point role''.

One day before the commemoration event, experts and policy-makers held in-depth discussions during a technical session on topical issues to effectively advance the home-grown school feeding agenda at the national and regional levels in the continent; international experiences like that of Brazil and Russia were shared.

The high-level celebration was concluded with a final communiqué, wherein several recommendations were stated to AU Member States, African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, and Partners on measures to be undertaken to scale up financing and implementation of home-grown school feeding programmes and harness its potential in fighting poverty and meeting development goals enshrined in the Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

For further information please contact:

Ms. Claudette Chancelle BILAMPASSI MOUTSATSI | PAU- ESTI Communication Officer| Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation| African Union Commission| **E-mail:** BilampassiC@africa-union.org**||** African Union Commission **Tel:** +251 115 517 700 **|** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Information and Communication Directorate, African Union Commission I **E-mail:** DIC@africa-union.org I **Web:** au.int **|** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **| Follow Us:** Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | YouTube