

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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AFRICAN UNION HIGHLIGHTS SCHOOL MEALS PROGRESS AS GLOBAL COALITION MEETS IN KENYA

NAIROBI, Kenya — The School Meals Coalition held its Second Ministerial Meeting of the Task Force on October 29, 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya, bringing together key stakeholders to review progress and chart the future course of school meal programs worldwide. The high-level meeting, opened by H.E. Dr. William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya, showcased significant achievements in expanding access to school meals globally.

In his address to the Task Force, Professor Saïdou Madougou, Director for the African Union Department in charge of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, highlighted the impressive progress made by African Union member states in improving their national school feeding programs. Using the local school meals model, designed to provide schoolchildren with safe, diverse, and nutritious food from smallholder farmers, member states have successfully scaled up their programs and increased national budgets by 5% between 2020 and 2022.



Professor Madougou reported that more than 65.9 million children across Africa now receive daily school meals, with national funding for these programs rising from 81% in 2020 to 84% in 2022, reflecting the strong political commitment of African nations to prioritizing child nutrition.

Professor Madougou also seized the opportunity to reiterate the African Union Commission's call for its inclusion as Co-Chair of the Coalition, emphasizing that 44 African nations have already joined the initiative, representing more than half of all Coalition member states. The African Union's involvement would be crucial in maximizing the platform's potential and strengthening its impact across the continent.

The meeting addressed several crucial areas, including sustainable financing solutions, technical support for national programs, and strategies to break down silos between education, health, and food systems sectors. Discussions also focused on engaging new partners from civil society, philanthropies, and the private sector to support program expansion.



Looking ahead, the African Union Commission outlined plans to help member states develop targeted action plans, set ambitious goals, and secure necessary political support. The Commission will also work on innovative financing strategies to enhance both domestic funding and donor engagement for school feeding initiatives.

The gathering concluded with renewed commitment to accelerate progress toward universal school meal coverage by 2030, recognizing these programs as fundamental investments in education, health, and

sustainable development.

The School Meals Coalition is a global partnership launched in 2021 to ensure every child has access to a nutritious meal in school by 2030. Co-chaired by Brazil, Finland, and France, the Coalition brings together 103 countries and over 130 partners committed to restoring, improving, and expanding school meal programs worldwide. It should be noted that coverage of school meal programs has expanded to reach 418 million children in 2024, up from 388 million in 2020.

For further information, please contact:

Ms Claudette Chancelle BILAMPASSI MOUTSATSI | ESTI Department- Pan African University | African Union Commission | E-mail: BilampassiC@africa-union.org | Tel: +251 11 518 2014/ +251 11 5182518 |

Mr. Gamal Eldin Ahmed A. Karrar | Senior Communication Officer | Information and Communication Directorate | African Union Commission | E-mail: GamalK@africa-union.org | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Information and Communication Directorate, African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@africa-union.org |

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