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KEY NOTE STATEMENT

BY

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COMMISSIONER,

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AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

ON

**THE 20TH ANNUAL GLOBAL CHILD NUTRITION FORUM, AND CESA
HOME**

GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING CLUSTER MEETING

OCTOBER 20-25, 2018

Tunis , Tunisia

Your Excellency the PM of Tunis Minister Here present

Your Excellences Minister Here present

Your Excellences Deputy Ministers Present

Executive Directors Present

Partners and Stakeholders in your different ranks and portfolios

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honour and pleasure to bring you warm greetings from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H. E. Dr. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT who believes so much that quality education can empower the youth of Africa and all children deserve the right to primary and secondary education.

It is a great honour to be in Tunisia with great people at this North African tip which is endowed with natural wonders of Mediterranean Sea and Sahara Desert, plus with various archaeological exhibits from Roman mosaics to Islamic art, ancient Carthage features and many artifacts. On behalf of the African Union Commission and on my own behalf, I am honored to express appreciation to the great people and government of Tunisia for your most cordial welcome, and for accepting to host THE 20TH ANNUAL GLOBAL CHILD NUTRITION FORUM, AND CESA HOME GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING CLUSTER MEETING. Happy birthday to GCNF. This is the 20 years anniversary of the Global Child Nutrition and initiatives. Congratulations to the forum, for the vision and passion of Zero Hunger across the globe. Thank you for sparkling and continuously igniting the fire.

My Department is HRST. It is the heartbeat of the strategic framework called Agenda 2063 – the vision of an integrated, peaceful and prosperous Africa driven by its own competent and skilled citizens able to play in the global arena. Agenda 2063 is a roadmap for the social economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years. Agenda 2063 lists 7 aspirations of Africa, none of which is achievable without quality inclusive transformative education and training. The aspirations call for a people-driven development,

relying on the potential of its people, especially the youth, and including women; and emphasizes the need to catalyze an Education and Skills revolution anchored in science, technology, research and innovation, for building transformative knowledge, with African values for responsible citizenship and sustainable development. Africa's Agenda 2063 can be considered as the continent's domestication of the global Sustainable Development Goals.

Education is core on the AU's political commitment being at the heart of the AU's Agenda 2063, where Member States have committed to expanding universal access to quality early childhood, primary and secondary education. It is one of decisive fields of endeavour which the African Union considers as being of utmost importance towards realising the African Union vision of an integrated, peaceful and prosperous Africa. Therefore three education flagship were created: CESA 2016-2025, STISA 2024 and the Continental TVET.

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) was developed and adopted as informed by Agenda 2063 to provide a common basis for national, regional and continental program design and implementation, and above all, an overall framework for mobilization of all key stakeholders. CESA 16-25; and as a regional operationalization framework for SDG number 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote Life Long Learning (LLL) opportunities for all and to foster the skills, human capital, and education revolution in Africa. It is a Strategy to re-position Africa's Education and Training Systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, innovation and creativity required to nurture African core values and promote sustainable development at all levels and towards achieving the African We Want embedded in Agenda 2063. Investments in human capital, especially in education and making education available for all is one of the proposed Strategic Objectives to be achieved in implementing CESA.

This is also said to have a strong correlation with poverty-reduction interactions by lowering fertility rate, assist in the prevention of HIV/AIDS and health related problems, reducing girls vulnerability, reducing child mortality, and acting as a key instrument in addressing other socio-economic problems, and above all harnessing demographic dividends.

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016-2025) spells out Africa's ambition for education that will enable girls and boys, women and men to be the drivers of Africa's socio-economic development as envisioned in Agenda 2063. Malnourished kids cannot become the energetic and charismatic youth we want them to be. An African proverb says; "You cannot tell a hungry child today that you ate yesterday. You cannot think accurately when the stomach grumbles continuously in protest".

It is obvious that education for both girls and boys it is critical for Africa to make the desired progress towards the Global Sustainable Development Goals - 2030 and Agenda 2063. School Feeding Programmes have been seen as one of the key tools in anchoring the two major Global Development Goals - SDG 2 and SDG 4. It also constantly has proved to advance education, health, nutrition outcomes of school-going children, and have the potential to benefit entire communities through stimulating local markets, facilitating agricultural transformation and enabling households to invest in productive assets.

For this purpose since 2003, Home Grown School Feeding (HGSE) programme was introduced as part of the Comprehensive Africa Development Programme (CAADP), and considered as one of 4 flagship programmes in CAADP -Pillar 3 also NEPAD identified HGSE as having an immediate impact on food insecurity in Africa, with the potential to contribute to long-term development goals.

Furthermore, to achieve CESA's Strategic Objective 2, which aims to "build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, so as to expand access to quality education", the AU Heads of State and Government committed strengthening Home Grown School Feeding (HGSE) as a critical action, and adopted it through the Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI).

This decision called for among others:

- 1) 1) the establishment of a multidisciplinary technical committee of African experts, under the chairmanship of the African Union Commission;
- 2) The institution of an African day of school feeding on the 1st March of every year beginning 2016 as the African day of School Feeding.

- 3) The establishment of a multidisciplinary technical committee of African experts, under the chairmanship of the African Union Commission and the support of institutions such as the WFP and the Centre of Excellence Against Hunger, in order to undertake a general study on the relevance and impact of school feeding in the AU Member States;
- 4) Encouraged Member states with school feeding programmes to continue their efforts;

In line with this, the Commission has celebrated three events on African Day of School Feeding. After the institution of the 1st March for the Africa day of School Feeding in January 2016 Niger graciously hosted the first edition of the African Day of School Feeding on the 1st of March 2016 under the theme “Home Grown School Feeding- a conduit for Africa’s Sustainable Development”. Similarly, in 2017 at Continental level, the celebration of the Second African Day of School Feeding took place in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo under the theme “Home Grown School Feeding: Investment in Youth and Children for Harnessing the Demographic Dividend”, in accordance with the theme of the year while several Member States have celebrated at the national level. For the third time the African day of School Feeding was celebrated centered around an agreed theme, based on the African union theme of the year " Realizing African Child’s Full Potential through Effective Home Grown School Feeding ", in accordance with the AU Theme of the year 2018 “Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation”.

This is because of the fact that HGFSF when connected to local agriculture production from smallholders` farmers– the value is immense. School feeding provides a powerful institutional market and can produce impacts in the local supply chain, and benefit communities. Home Grown School Feeding has multi-sectorial benefits that can drive development. Using School meals as an entry point we are able to contribute to improve educational, food and nutrition security, health and has overall impacts in addressing social safety net. HGFSF is a good strategy for countries which are looking for developing their national sustainable programmes and contribute to the promotion of food and nutrition security.

However, it is noted that, in Africa, more children do not benefit from school feeding, and in countries with the highest poverty rates where school meals

would make a big difference, the reach of school meal programmes is far smaller. School Feeding coverage for primary school pupils (in %) across Member States shows for most of the countries below 50%.

Furthermore, as stipulated in the CESA 16-25 the Strategy is designed to be implemented through the coalition of stakeholders as per the AU (Summit Decision July 2014), and tries to secure a high level institutional engagement from partners; promote multi-sectoral approach; jointly identify and develop strategic initiatives; identify and mobilize champions, and Modular THEMATIC CLUSTER approach.

Clustering under specific thematic areas has been identified as an effective tool for enhancing coordination, strengthening partnerships, and linking knowledge, policy and practice around common themes and policy issues. This is anticipated to enhance alignment and harmony among stakeholders as well as facilitate the identification and deployment of governance synergies for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness. The cluster acts as an AU forum where stakeholders from different sectors have access to technical information on the design and implementation of school feeding programmes, and it also provides the space to organise joint actions to support advocacy and resource mobilization in this area. This operational structure for policy dialogue supports maximizing the spread of school feeding information across the AU.

The Cluster aims to bring together actors working on school feeding, guide the school feeding actions, coordinate resources for achieving CESA's Strategic Objectives and operational planning and aligning their respective strategies to achieve the CESA 16-25 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Hence, I would like to urge the participants to review and approve the draft CESA School Feeding Cluster Strategy, Terms of Reference and the Work Plan (2019-2021); review, discuss and approve the Continental Home Grown School Feeding Indicators and Reporting Framework; and discuss on the Mechanisms for Harmonization of the school feeding initiatives within the continent.

I also encourage that government representatives from different sectors to deepen discussions on mobilizing technical and financial support to gain the most benefit from investing in nutritious, locally-sourced school feeding

programmes. For this purpose it is very important to innovate funding resources and promote national stable funding with policies, laws and strategies to enable sustainable and long-lasting school feeding programmes, and engaging the private sector in school feeding programmes is an opportunity for innovative financial resources for local markets support and development.

Therefore, I firmly urge all member states to increase investment in HGSP so as to harvest increased impacts on education and learning indicators, Health and Nutrition, and Agriculture and Local Economic Development. Moreover, I would encourage member states and partners to link school feeding programmes to international, continental and national development agendas; design and implement school feeding programmes to achieve cross-sectoral policy objectives; Invest in and empower multi-sectoral response and coordination mechanism; commit to developmental procurement strategies that exert a strong focus on increasing local production capacities; Innovate financing strategies by diversifying financing sources and/or implementing co-financing mechanisms; devote resources to stronger M&E systems and automate feedback processes to improve policy outcomes; and deepen and learn from South-South and pan-African cooperation to optimise policy impacts.

I also stress the importance of promote policy and operational dialogue within national level and set up Home Grown school feeding cluster at national levels engaging parliaments, council of ministers, regional conference of ministers (Specialized Technical Committee for Education), sub-regional and RECS, Un agencies, NGOs, and academics. In this regard, country ownership is critical for sustaining school feeding programmes. Also, national authorities responsible for school feeding should focus on food safety and nutrition indicators, reporting to mutual accountability platforms, such as the CESA School Feeding Cluster.

The Global Child Nutrition Forum, lasting gratitude for your initiative. Your stand that Education, Agriculture and Health nutrition are the 3 pillars of Development is complementary to our CESA 2016-2025 and STISA 2024. This Forum is an essential driver of SF and the agenda of strengthening agriculture, this Annual Forum is a catharsis to change. Building jobs and profit through the SF programme leads to Development and sustainability.

We need to cohere our efforts by connecting with the local small holder farmers, policy makers, investors, private sectors and making the kids learn from an early age. We need to recalibrate on agriculture so as to fight against the malnutrition in many areas. Thank you to Dr. Daniel Balaban, the Director of COE in Brazil for the South – South cooperation and the work you do at the Centre of Excellence. The 32 member states, How can I not appreciate you for walking the talk and coming to Tunis to share your experiences? Indeed when there is a political - Will, when the political will have a socio economic vision, the country development accelerates much faster. You are the ones to drive the change. Thank you to Brazil, and for the 1st visit in 2015 that has influenced our innovation in SF. The social benefits of HGSA cannot be overemphasised. We count to learn from your knowledge and expertise on how you succeeded. FAO thanks for welcoming our CESA initiatives. The value of the HGSA & the ASF Day cannot be overemphasised.

The Assembly Decision compliments the work that WFP and the Global Child Nutrition initiatives do. Thanks WFP for the promise of assistance, expertise through your country offices, regional bureau and Headquarters. We must extend deep gratitude for walking the talk with us. Proud to be associates with such a committed partner. Thank you UNESCO-ICCBA for the commitment towards SF because as you rightly believe SF touches on quality education. Nutrition is to a sound education as water is to life so is Food to the soul. Bringing SF into the school curriculum is indeed an innovative way. This bring the communities to the school system. Thank you for the school materials and we continue to work together. Thank you to NEPAD now AUDA -the implementing Agency of AU that in 2003, you were able to coin the name. Gratitude extended to P4P- Purchase for Progress organization for providing the local small holders with materials. And thank you to the staff of the AUC particularly to the staff of HRST, DREA and DSA working on this thematic cluster. And our technical partners who have facilitated the event, gracias. Our host country thanks for your hospitality and reception. All the distinguished representatives from 60 countries thank you. And indeed the 350 people here present Merci nombreux fois.

Yes, there might be tough roads ahead, but we do not quiver because success is guaranteed because we are walking and working together. We can start working towards the Africa we want through investing in education

and school feeding and Africa will be a place to be for all in order not to miss 2030 deadlines for SDGs.

These change processes cannot be achieved as an island. An African proverb says 'Tomorrow belongs to those who prepared for it today'. Desmond TUTU puts it so well, Ubuntu, I am because you are. Yes distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, organisations and stakeholders in this domain; your partnership, collaboration and drive are needed for us to achieve our ambitious, yet realisable dream.

I reiterate that all the stakeholders and participants here present are our voice of implementation because of your commitment towards HGSA. Indeed the 20th Annual Global Child Nutrition Forum, and CESA HGSA cluster meeting is the way forward to measuring what we have achieved and what better strategic to implement for the future.

The HOS have taken the decision and the implementing is the Member States, partners and technical people present here. We must prove our mandate and do our job and deliver to our people. Posterity will judge us for what we did or what we did not do.

Please remember that the celebration of 2019 African School Feeding Day is hosted in Cote D'Ivoire. By the grace of God we meet in Ivory Coast 1st of March 2019. By the grace of God we shall get back home safely to our different destinations.

I thank you.