

AFRICAN UNION

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KEY NOTE STATEMENT

BY

H. E. PROF. SARAH ANYANG AGBOR

COMMISSIONER,

HUMAN RESOURCES, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

ON THE

1st March 2019

4TH AFRICAN DAY OF SCHOOL FEEDING

FEBRUARY 27TH TO 1ST MARCH, 2019

Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire

Your Excellency, the Vice President of the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire, His Excellency Mr. DANIEL KABLAN DUNCAN; We cannot thank you enough Your Excellency. Thank you so much for gracing this day and giving it an elegant and VVVVIP status.

My sister, elegant and charismatic Honourable Minister of National Education, Technical and Professional Training of the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire, H.E. Mrs. Kandia Camara;

Your Excellencies Ministers of Education, Health, Agriculture and Finance of African Union Member States here present; I am proud of your engagement and commitment;

Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished and eminent Partners from FAO, WFP, UN, UNICEF, Mr. Balaban, Centre of Excellence, Country Representatives of WFP Programmes; Representative and members of Cocody, Journalists, media, interpreters;

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. MR. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT**. On my own behalf and on behalf of the African Union Commission, I am honored to express appreciation to the great people and government of Cote D'Ivoire; for your most cordial welcome of participants, and for accepting to host the 4th edition of the African Day of School Feeding, which is in implementation of a decision of the January 2016 Summit of the African Union to recognise the immense value of school feeding by celebrating the African Day of School Feeding. Your Excellency, all the distinguished Ministers here have had an extraordinary time. At the end of our meeting at almost 9:30pm, the Minister of National Education gave us an African night.

It is the wish of African Heads of States and Government that the Africa Day of School Feeding is commemorated annually every 1st of March in order to reiterate the importance of school feeding, to rally support for programmes, and to celebrate

achievements recorded in the course of implementing the programme as major contributions towards achieving the Africa Union Agenda 2063, ***“the Africa We Want”***.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African continent is full of tremendous promise and demographically the youngest in the world. Aspiration 1 of Africa Agenda 2063 states “We aspire that by 2063, Africa shall be a prosperous continent with well-educated and skilled citizens, under pinned by science, technology and innovation for a knowledge society is the norm and no child misses school due to poverty or any form of discrimination”.

Realizing Africa’s potential and aspirations depends on the investments that are made today towards the development of Africa’s children and young people. After all, tomorrow belongs to those who prepared for it today.

It is for this reason that the African Union places at the forefront of its priorities, the transformative role of quality education and training in building human capacity and to empower our youth, women and all constituencies without marginalizing anyone.

The AU Agenda 2063 and its strategic framework, emphasizes the achievement of socio-economic transformation of Africa over the next 50 years.

Key to this transformation is Education and training which is anchored in strong science, technology and innovation. Early Childhood Education and Development is the essential foundation for this, as stated in the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25). A famous book states ‘train up a child in the way that he should go, and afterward he shall not depart from it’. This means the desired values, attitudes, dispositions and indeed potential in the population must be nurtured and developed from early years.

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) calls for governments to ensure that everyone completes secondary education as a compulsory input into human empowerment and preparation for productive careers in building our economies and ensuring social, political and environmental stability. Completion of secondary education is the essential foundation in building skilled workforce, encouraging innovation, promoting entrepreneurial mindsets and imbuing societal values and responsible citizenship.

The success of young people in Technical and Vocational Education and Training, or in the more academic university degrees is determined in the earlier years. The agency of school feeding in keeping children in school and promoting physical emotional and cognitive development cannot be overstated. If we are to produce the quality human virtues for the Africa We Want, we have to do more and invest more strategically in

school feeding, and enhance local financing. Our vision is the vision of FAO, WFP, and the Center of Excellence as I have heard in your speeches.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Under the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) is one of the key initiatives and efforts to ensure universal school enrolment in Africa, helping children from the poorest households and children who live in difficult areas to have access to quality education in safe and conducive environments.

Through effective School Feeding programmes, the Africa Union commits to ensure children are well nourished, to guarantee their ability to concentrate and learn; to ensure sustainable sources of food supply preferably from local communities; ensure increased local resourcing for school feeding; and work to optimize multi-sectoral engagement to ensure the design and implementation of national, innovative school feeding programmes.

This is the 4th School Feeding Day celebration, having celebrated previously in Niamey, Niger; in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo; and last year in Harare, Zimbabwe. Thank you all brave and generous Member States who have demonstrated that investing in school feeding is a strategic investment in the future of our countries.

In the African Union, 2019 has been declared as ***“The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa”***. It is therefore essential to consider how we ensure that children and young people living as refugees and displaced persons are catered for. Education is a human right, therefore we must endeavour to ensure that all children and young people irrespective of social status access quality transformative education. This means that our school feeding programmes as well as other social interventions that promote access and success in education have to mainstream displaced persons. It calls for increased local and international resourcing. Yesterday at the Ministerial session, member gave their different experiences with refugees and internally displaced person.

The theme of 2019 also means that education must contribute to prevention of conflict and prevention of environmental degradation, which are the main causes for forced displacement. I am happy to let you know that the AUC is working with Member States and partner agencies in addressing these issues to ensure protection of education to secure access and success under all circumstances; and in the use of education to prevent violent extremism and develop African values and responsible citizenship.

We therefore adopted the theme: ***“Investing in Home Grown School Feeding For Achieving Zero Hunger, and Sustaining Inclusive Education For All Including Refugees And Displaced Persons In Africa”***. Discussions held yesterday therefore explored the links between Home-Grown School Feeding and humanitarian, peace and development in Africa.

School Feeding is definitely among the social protection systems that will make a critical contribution to meeting durable solutions to forced displacement and their causative social and environmental crises in Africa. Linked to other social protection initiatives such as Agriculture and Promotion of Food and Nutrition Security, this intervention has great potential to change communities by building resilience and disaster preparedness.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

If education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the World, then I dare say quality food is the source of the strength for quality education. We reaffirm the contribution of School Feeding to the achievement of Zero Hunger, and the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition. It is therefore essential that school feeding programmes in member states are multi-sectorial and well-coordinated to ensure optimal resourcing and optimal impacts. Look at the pupil’s drama. It speaks everything. The director and the kids at N’zikro said, “We are in class, we sleep, we do not concentrate because our stomach rumble Hallelujah chorus”. Please in all our schools let it be “un école, un cantine”. “One school, One Canteen “. Remember hunger is felt by slave and king alike.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a survey carried out by the AUC, we have noted significant process made in most of the countries that submitted reports. In 14 Member States, numbers of children covered by school feeding programmes have more than doubled from 2016 to 2018. In the same time frame, number of local food producers involved in school feeding has exponentially increased from about 2000 to nearly 35,000.

In most of the countries submitting reports, School Feeding has been added in national strategies and gender has been mainstreamed. Furthermore, multi-sectoral engagement has improved and been formalized in the same Member States. We have also noted that South-South and intra-African collaboration for knowledge exchange and experience sharing has been strengthened.

This is good news. However, much more needs to be done. It will be necessary to increase contributions from local resources, and continue to increase the coverage of schools in school feeding programmes. Furthermore, Member States must endeavor to

monitor and report against agreed indicators, so that we will be able to understand the landscape to be better able to intervene. This will also increase the knowledge base and ensure knowledge based planning.

Finally, I encourage the Member States to embrace Quality Assurance Mechanisms and Standards, which will integrate all components of Home Grown School Feeding for Quality Education to be assessed; and for Quality Trainings on Nutrition to be delivered. We saw in Zimbabwe last year how well managed School Gardens can be good supplies for nutrition and extra income for supporting school activities and assisting poorer children. For optimal impact, school feeding may be used as a platform for anchoring integrated health and sanitation services.

Keeping our children and young people well educated, well fed and healthy is our common responsibility. This we must do at all costs. Yesterday, les élèves du Groupe Scolaire de N'zikro ont témoigné "que chaque rentrée Scolaire, Maman Kandia Camara, fournit notre cantine des vivres pour nous permettre de prendre un repas chaud a midi". This is what we want to hear.

Excellency, from Harare to Abidjan and next year all roads lead to Djamena, Chad.

I commend you all for your choice to be part of this great event, the best Africa Day of School Feeding celebration ever! Yes we need to keep our eyes focused on making food a priority.

Thanks to WFP Liaison Office in particular, The Centre of Excellence, UNESCO, Save the Children, FAO, who have supported us technically and financially at Continental and National Levels. God bless you as you work to ensure a peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa, by ensuring that the next generation is appropriately empowered. There is no alternative.

Bonne fetes a toutes et a tous. Je vous remercie. I thank you, Obrigado, Merci Beaucoup, Shokran, Asante Sana.

H. E. Prof. (Mrs) Sarah Anyang Agbor

Commissioner AU-HRST.