



PRESS RELEASE

WFP EXECUTIVE BOARD: HRST COMMISSIONER TAKING PART TO THE SIDE EVENT IN WFP HEADQUARTERS, ROME-ITALY- 15 JUNE 2016

Rome, Italy, 15 June 2016 – The World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Board Side Event took place in Rome (Italy), to mark the Centre's fifth anniversary.

Prior to the side event, the African Union's Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, Dr. Martial De-Paul Ikounga, addressed the group of African ambassadors present in Rome. The Commissioner made a six-prong presentation on the following strategies developed in AUC Department HRST: the Continental Strategy for Education (CESA-16-25); the Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024); Harmonizing Higher Education systems and the Addis Ababa Convention ; AU theme for 2017 : "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investments in Youth"; African Union Youth Volunteers in their support for HGSF.

Then followed the side event and the Commissioner was finally received by the WFP Executive Director, Ms Ertharin Cousin.

Also took part at the side event were the following: the Brazilian Ambassador, Maria Laura da Rocha, the director of the WFP Centre, Daniel Balaban and WFP's executive director, Ertharin Cousin.

Ambassador Maria Laura da Rocha, Permanent Representative of Brazil to FAO, WFP and IFAD, focused on the South-South cooperation activities of Brazil in partnership with WFP.

On his part, the WFP's executive director hailed the support of the Centre of Excellence to WFPs' efforts to reinforce governments' initiatives towards Zero Hunger.

In his talking points, the Commissioner insisted on the following:

- Advantages and Benefits of investing in school feedings, which are also linked to the SDG4. School feeding, he said, provides a powerful institutional market and can produce impacts in the local supply chain, and benefit communities. "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."
- He further recalled that in 2003, Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme was introduced as part of the Comprehensive Africa Development Programme (CAADP). He also stressed the partnership between WFP and AU Commission HRST.

- With regards to South-South Cooperation, the Commissioner congratulated the CoE for role it has played to share practices as well as build capacity, in its year of existence.

The Commissioner expressed the wish that the “existing partnership between the African Union and World Food Programme should further strengthen, especially in advocating for increased investments and governments’ commitments.”

Daniel Balaban, director of the Centre of Excellence against Hunger, stated the South-South Cooperation approach in which the Centre of Excellence is keen in taking part and fostering policy dialogue on school feeding and related Zero Hunger Strategies. For this reason, they support exchanges of experiences and best practices. A vivid example is the launch of the African School Feeding Network: “the Centre of Excellence is currently supporting the African Union in the elaboration of a study about the benefits of school feeding programmes in Africa and its potential when linked to local purchase from smallholder farmers to promote sustainable social and economic development”.

As a symbol of the strong relationships between the World Food Programme and African Union Commission, H.E Dr. Martial De-Paul was received by Ms Ertharin Cousin. Together they took stock of their cooperation in order to consolidate the existing excellent relationship with WFP and to leverage current strong foundation between the two institutions. While WFP is working towards the implementation of the SDG 2, the HRST department is all hands on deck for the achievement of SDG 4 but it clearly appears that the meeting point of both institutions is the common endeavour to promote Education in Africa through Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI) on School feeding. Both institutions jointly advocate for improved Education Outcomes, improved Nutrition, and, by linking school meals with local agriculture production.

Commissioner HRST underlined among others that, in HRST mandate, Education is at the core of AU political agenda which encourages Member States to increase their efforts to improve their investment in education and to create a conducive learning environment. Education is at the heart of AU’s Agenda 2063, where Member States have committed to expand universal access to quality early childhood, primary and secondary education. School feeding is key in achieving the targets set on education.

Finally, H.E. mentioned that one of AUC’s key tasks is also to empower Africa’s youth. HRST Department has a volunteer programme promoting and preparing young Africans for the job market. He underlined the possibility to recruit young African agronomists as AU volunteers in order to support the school feeding project in African countries. WFP ED welcomed this idea and promised to fully support this initiative.

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