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### AU – HRST COMMISSIONER TOOK PART TO THE 18<sup>TH</sup> GLOBAL CHILD NUTRITION FORUM in Yerevan, Armenia, from September 5 to 9.



**Yerevan, Armenia, September 6, 2016:** the opening ceremony of the 18th Annual Global Child Nutrition Forum was launched on the 6 September, under the theme: ***“Building Powerful and Durable National School Meal Programs”***. The forum is jointly organised by the Global Child Nutrition Fund and the WFP Centre of Excellence. It is the largest school feeding forum in the world, with representatives from more than 40 countries who meet to discuss ways and means to improve school meals programmes. The objective is to highlight opportunities to build the investment case and political support that ensures that the programmes will

thrive over time and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The event was opened by Armenia’s Prime Minister, Mr Hovik Abrahamyan. Among the invitees were the following: 11 African Ministers in charge for Finance, Education and Agriculture, representatives of government officials, companies, international organizations and NGOs. Among the keynote speakers, during the opening ceremony, were the African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, H.E Dr. Martial De-Paul Ikounga and the WFP Director, Ms. Ertharin Cousin.

On his keynote speech, the Commissioner stated that, School feeding is an investment in the future of our continent. He explained that the forum was also an opportunity for Member States to learn from other countries’ how to provide substantial and sustainable revenue to the members of the community by promoting the production of balanced, healthy local food. This allows children from poor background to enjoy a balanced diet and never be afraid or worry about harmful risks and consequences of hunger. Hence, they will focus on the educational and learning activities that ensure better results for the global and African educational system worldwide and specifically in Africa’

The Commissioner also seized the opportunity to talk about the implementation of the Assembly/AU/Dec.589 (XXVI) adopted by the Heads of States and Government during the January Summit 2016, and namely the points on the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) as the framework for transformative education as well as the

immense value of Home Grown School Feeding (HGFS) programme as recognized by the Assembly as a tool to enhancing retention and performance of children in schools, and in boosting income generation and entrepreneurship in local communities.

As requested by the Head of States and Government, the Commissioner further recalled the establishment of a multidisciplinary technical committee of African experts to undertake a general study on the relevance and impact of School feeding in Member States. An African institution has already been selected to undertake the said study and the main goals and the methodology of the research has being elaborated said the Commissioner.



The WFP Executive Director delivered a keynote speech which focussed on **partnership to ensure education for the next generation: the importance of school meals.**

She asked why school meals and responded by mentioning that School feeding programs are a powerful and integrated way to encourage children to attend school, support their learning, and prepare them for

success. Working with local farmers and making use of perishable foods such as fruits and vegetables, schools can provide daily meals to more children while increasing local economic returns. She made the following statement: “School meals are often the only meals a hungry child receives. Thus, by providing the poorest children with the catalyst to attend school, we open up a range of other opportunities for them.”

Besides the Keynote speech, H.E Dr. Martial De-Paul Ikounga also took part in official Visit to the Armenian Genocide Memorial and on day two of the Forum, he proceeded to the question and answers activities whereby among others, the public asked him why is Home Grown School Feeding a key priority for the African Union, what role will the African Union play in promoting the scaling up of HGFS, how is the AUC helping the Member States to enact policies and programmes on HGFS; the financing mechanism and the African Union Strategy in the design and implementation of school meals programmes.

Finally, under the moderation of H.E Dr. Martial De-Paul Ikounga and requested by the Minister of Education of Niger, all the African delegations present at the Forum attended the side meeting to discuss school feeding as a continental initiative, school feeding network and the organization and celebration of the second edition Africa Day of School Feeding on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017. The public sincerely thanked the Commissioner for being a champion of HGFS in Africa.

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