

## PRESS RELEASE

## AFRICAN UNION COMEMORATES THE SECOND EDITION OF AFRICAN SCHOOL FEEDING DAY



**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 1 March, 2017.** To commemorate the second edition of the African Day of School Feeding at national level, the event was officially celebrated at Kokbe Tsebah Primary School in Addis Ababa. About one hundred guests and partners attended including the First Lady of Ethiopia, the Minister of Education, State Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Deputy Minister for Basic Education, WFP Head of Programmes, representatives of USAID, and UNICEF. A delegation of the African Union Commission was also represented at the event held under the theme: *“Home Grown School Feeding: Investment in Youth and Children for Harnessing the Demographic*

*Dividend.”*

The Africa Day for School Feeding was instituted by the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments during the 26th African Union Summit in January 2016 (Assembly/AU/Dec. 589 (XXVI), in recognition of the immense value of home grown school feeding in improving retention and the performance of children in school. In addition, this programme is also dedicated to boosting income-generation and entrepreneurship in the local communities.

In his opening speech, the Minister of Education stressed that Ethiopia shall be implementing national school feeding programmes in all schools as part of the newly developed National School Health Nutrition Strategy. He added that ‘the national school feeding programme will not be limited only to schools where students are vulnerable to malnutrition and food shortage, but also will be applicable to all primary schools.’ The overview of School Meals Program in Ethiopia and the Government’s future direction was presented by the Deputy Minister for Basic Education highlighting the Ministries’ strategy for implementation of a holistic school feeding programme that will be integrated into the national education system.



Remarks were also made by Dr. Yohannes Woldetensae, Senior Education Expert who underlined the importance for this historic day and highlighted the multiple benefits that extend beyond the school. 'It stimulates areas such as agriculture, nutrition, health, and social development. The programme encourages families to consistently send their children to school, reducing child labour, early pregnancy and early marriage.' He also emphasized that the programme has already been implemented in many African countries and the lessons learned shall be shared to promote effective continental strategies.

The First Lady who is also the Ambassador for the Nutrition and School meals Programme in Ethiopia concluded the event by assuring those in attendance of Ethiopia's commitment to embrace the African Union Member States decision to implement Home Grown School Feeding at national levels. Similarly, the representative of the WFP pledged support to the School feeding Programme in Ethiopia, and to work closely with the African Union Commission to the successful implementation of this initiative.

**For further information contact**

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: [dic@african-union.org](mailto:dic@african-union.org)  
| Web Site: [www.au.int](http://www.au.int) | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

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