



African Union commitment to the School Meals Coalition: turning political commitment into concrete action

High-level segment at the first regular session of the Executive Board
Tuesday, 1 March 2022, starting at 15:00
Virtual session

This is a summary description of the School Meals Coalition session on Tuesday, 1 March 2022, which will be opened by the Executive Director, David Beasley, and will include a keynote address by Her Excellency Angeline Ndayishimiye, First Lady of Burundi.

Context

The African Day of School Feeding is a rallying point to reinforce and strengthen political will for school feeding in Africa since 2016. It is celebrated every year on 1 March. Its main aim is to inspire bold commitments and actions towards school feeding programmes continent-wide.

During the 2021 African Day of School Feeding celebration, the African Union and partners called for the creation of a School Meals Coalition and encouraged Member States to join and lead the way. African countries followed this call and spearheaded the establishment of a coalition, which was launched during the food systems summit. African countries make up the majority of member states of the School Meals Coalition – out of 62 countries, 25 plus the African Union and the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD have joined. This is a real testament to the vision and commitment of governments for the future of the continent. WFP is proud to have supported the School Meals Coalition as a coordinating body from the start.

Over the past decade, African Union member states have made significant efforts to increase their budget allocations and adopt rigorous policy frameworks for school feeding. These efforts have not only led to the feeding of more children, but also to improving the quality of school health and nutrition interventions across the continent. In 2019, 65.4 million children received school meals across Africa, a 71 percent increase from 38.4 million in 2013.

The COVID-19 pandemic has become one of the largest education crises in recent history, causing devastating effects on the lives of children. During the peak of the pandemic in April 2020, 42 countries in sub-Saharan Africa announced school closures, leaving an estimated 50 million children without access to education or school meals.

The coalition gathers countries and partners together to help tackle this crisis. The aim of the coalition is straightforward: every child worldwide can receive a healthy and nutritious school meal by 2030. It will do so by restoring effective school meals programmes that were lost to the pandemic; scaling up programmes to the most vulnerable; and improve the quality and efficiency of existing school meals programmes in all countries.

During the 2022 Executive Board first regular session, Board members will commemorate this day by celebrating commitments of the African Union and African countries to school feeding and the global School Meals Coalition during a special session.

Objectives

This session will introduce the central aim of 2022; to take the discussion around school feeding further and turn political commitments into concrete actions.

1. Share and celebrate political commitment of African countries towards sustainable school meal programmes.
2. Discuss support provided by global partners through the School Meals Coalition.

Agenda

15:00 **Opening and welcoming remarks**

Mr David Beasley, Executive Director of WFP, as Secretariat of the School Meals Coalition

15:05 **Keynote Speaker**

Her Excellency Angeline Ndayishimiye, First Lady of Burundi

15:15 **Moderated round table**

Moderator: Ms Valerie Guarnieri, Assistant Executive Director, WFP

- Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer, African Union Development Agency-NEPAD
- Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO
- Mr Máximo Torero Cullen, Chief Economist, FAO
- Mr Andrew Morley, Chief Executive Officer, World Vision

15:50 **Remarks from the floor** – one representative of each electoral list

16:10 **Closing remarks**

Ms Liesbet Steer, Director of the Education Commission