



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. WILLIAM
SAMOEI RUTO, CGH, PRESIDENT AND
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE
FORCES, DURING THE SECOND MINISTERIAL
MEETING OF THE GLOBAL SCHOOL MEALS
COALITION**

OCTOBER 29, 2024

NAIROBI

Ms. Cyndy McCain, Executive Director of the World Food Programme,

Ministers of the School Meals Coalition Task Force Present,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of the people and Government of Kenya, I warmly welcome you all to Nairobi and to your beautiful country. Welcome home! We are privileged to hold this Second Ministerial Meeting of the School Meals Coalition Taskforce in partnership with the World Food Programme, and it is an honour to host you, our esteemed visitors and partners in the noble mission of building a better tomorrow for our children.
2. All over the world, children spend, or ought to spend, 75% of their time at school and, under ideal conditions, should receive at least half of their daily meals there. It has been our long-held aspiration to maximise school enrolment and retention to ensure every child in Kenya has access to education. Recognising that access to food and nutrition is a significant factor in keeping children in school, Kenya introduced the School Meals Programme as early as 1966, just three years after our independence.
3. Initially, the programme was implemented only in Nairobi. However, the entry of the World Food Programme transformed the scale of the initiative, and our partnership enabled us to expand nationally by 1980.



The outcomes have been inspiring: It is undeniable that Kenya has recorded exemplary rates of enrollment, retention and academic performance throughout the duration of the programme.

4. In implementing the feeding programme, we have remained dynamic and innovative and are always on the lookout for strategies to enhance the programme's reach and impact. In 2009, we adopted a sustainable and home-grown model, which relies on locally sourced nutritious foods. By 2018, the programme was fully integrated as a national initiative, now benefiting 2.6 million learners - a more than tenfold increase from the initial 240,000. The programme's transformative impact extends beyond education, stimulating value chains within our agriculture and food systems and boosting our economy.
5. School meals, therefore, have far-reaching benefits: they make adequate nutrition accessible, foster learning, create jobs, promote sustainability, and uplift communities. Yet, hunger remains a significant challenge to the well-being of many, particularly in arid regions. To address this, we have tripled the budgetary allocation for school feeding and set a clear goal: to expand the programme's coverage from 2.6 million to 10 million children by 2030.
6. Towards this end, we launched an operational plan to scale up the programme earlier this month. We are committed to action and are fully determined to succeed. Kenya is also addressing climate challenges by combining initiatives that promote resilience, including robust support for school meals, provision for local sourcing, and fostering sustainable practices such as clean cooking and the adoption of drought-resistant crops.



7. Through advocacy under the **“Call to Action for Climate-Friendly School Feeding,”** we are embracing eco-friendly solutions. As we do this, we realise that achieving universal coverage requires partnership on a much broader scale. Simply put, universal coverage demands global collaboration to leverage our shared capacities. This is why Kenya joined the Coalition in 2021. We want all our partners to unite under the National School Meal Coalition to achieve this ambition.
8. The Global School Meals Coalition brings together governments, multilateral organisations like the WFP, and philanthropies such as the Rockefeller Foundation and Novo Nordisk. Together, we are rebuilding programmes post-pandemic, reaching underserved areas, and improving efficiency. We welcome more agencies to come on board and make their contribution to a platform with the widest global reach.
9. The Coalition has given me the honour of working with leaders like Presidents Lula Da Silva of Brazil and Emmanuel Macron of France in advancing school meals globally. I extend my gratitude to them and commend, in particular, Brazil’s G20-led Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty. Kenya calls on other nations to join us in this shared quest to ensure no child is left behind.
10. I salute our partners, including the WFP, World Bank, Global Partnership for Education, and the governments of the United States, France, Germany, and China, for their steadfast commitment. With this unwavering support, we are better positioned to pave the way to a future where every child is nourished, empowered, and equipped to grow and succeed.

Thank you.

