

Paris Statement – First School Meals Coalition Global Meeting

Paris, 18-19 October 2023

The first School Meals Coalition Global Summit was held in Paris on October 18 and 19, 2023 to take stock of achievements, welcome new members, and discuss collective and country commitments on the way forward.

The Coalition was established under the shared conviction that school meal programmes meaningfully contribute to economic, social and environmental progress. Healthy school meals can indeed support goals in education, food security, nutrition, health, social protection, gender equality and transformation of agri-food systems, and climate action. They promote social equity, human capital development and intergenerational fairness.

Since its creation two years ago, the Coalition’s membership has steadily increased – from 46 countries in September 2021 to 90 in October 2023. 101 partner organizations have joined. This has resulted in a powerful mobilization of political will and country action towards one common goal: ensuring that every child receives a nutritious meal in school by 2030.

According to the latest available data, almost all programmes have rebounded in the aftermath of the pandemic, helping to achieve the first goal of the Coalition which was to restore access to school meals to all children who were affected by school closures. 418 million children are currently reached with school meals worldwide and there has been a USD 5 billion increase in domestic financing for the programmes (from USD 43 billion in 2020 to USD 48 billion in 2022). In comparison, before the COVID-19 pandemic, 388 million children received school meals yearly. Since 2020, low-income countries have increased domestic investment in school meals by 15% and 4 million jobs have been created, mostly for women.

The Summit, building upon the First Ministerial-level meeting of the Task Force of the School Meals Coalition held in Helsinki in October 2022, highlighted the major momentum and political will behind the Work of the Coalition. Notable achievements include the inclusion of school meals in the Leaders’ Declarations of the G20 meetings in Rome 2021, Bali 2022 and New Delhi 2023, as well as in the G20 Action Plan on Accelerating Progress on the SDGs, the 2023 Hiroshima Action Statement for Resilient Global Food Security adopted by G7 Leaders, the G7 Leaders’ Communiqué, and the G7 Agriculture Ministers’ Communiqué.

Summary of the main outcomes of the Summit

- **Brazil joined France and Finland as a co-chair of the Coalition.** Political commitment at the highest level of these three countries will continue to mobilize global action.
 - During its forthcoming G20 presidency in 2024, Brazil will emphasize school meals as a crucial instrument to combat hunger and malnutrition and to address poverty and inequality as part of the broader dialogue on the establishment of a Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty. Brazil also proposed a new initiative, titled "International Cooperation Strategy on School Feeding" aiming to spotlight and disseminate best practices for enhancing sustainable school feeding programs, notably through South-

South and trilateral cooperation projects on school feeding across Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia.

- Finland is strongly committed at high level to continue its advocacy work to generate interest and resources towards school meals. Finland remains a firm supporter of WFP's school meals programmes financially. Finland will also continue to provide technical expertise for countries wishing to develop their school meals programmes.
 - France will pursue its national ambition, including through the "1€ school meal" initiative and "free breakfast at school" and will scale up its efforts to achieve quality and sobriety through a "French Canteen Team". French research organizations working on school feeding, including Institut Agro, CIRAD, IRD and INRAE, will help identify solutions to implement the coalition's objectives. France will promote the Coalition's agenda at the highest level, including at the final IFAD-13 replenishment session in Paris in December 2023 and the 2024 Paris Olympic Games for sustainable development, and by implementing the "Call for food security" launched with its partners at UNGA78. France has increased its financial support to school feeding for vulnerable countries in 2023 and is committed to at least maintaining the same level for 2024, including through its financial support to WFP and its action against hunger globally."
- **We welcomed 9 new country members and partners:** Belgium, Italy, Latvia, Mongolia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Ukraine, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank.
 - **About 28 countries reported on progress since joining the Coalition and 6 countries made new commitments to scale up their national programmes and reach more children with healthy meals.** Countries of all income levels have demonstrated that progress is possible despite the challenges, collectively announcing increases in their domestic funding.
 - **5 regional groupings announced common actions in support of the scale up school meal programmes, including the launch of regional networks.** Representatives from the African Union, ECOWAS, Latin American and Caribbean region discussed how they have been developing a shared regional vision and corresponding actions that could improve the quality and scale of school meal programmes. We welcomed the establishment of the Regional School Meals Coalition Network in East Africa, as a platform for policy dialogue, peer learning and knowledge sharing as well as the announcement of a school meals regional meeting of Asian countries in 2024. We also welcomed the ongoing work of the Sustainable School Feeding Network (RAES) in Latin America and the Caribbean, supported by Brazil and FAO. The Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union announced a European event on school meals and child nutrition in 2023.
 - **Countries advanced the discussion to use school meals as levers for food system transformation towards sustainability and agreed to continue this discussion at Dubai's COP28 from November 30 to December 12, 2023.** A "White Paper" was presented by the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition. Kenya announced its commitment to adopt these approaches at the Africa Climate Summit in September 2023 and at the Coalition Summit, several countries and the EU followed.

- **Discussions on school meals programmes in the context of the ongoing consultation on the 13th replenishment of core resources of the International Fund for International Development (IFAD) were welcomed.** Appreciation was expressed for the commitment expressed by IFAD that the Fund would support the objectives of the Coalition and support to its replenishment was encouraged.
- **Support to countries for the scale up of their programmes was announced and discussed.** This included the Islamic Development Bank’s new “Human Capital Initiative”, the Global Partnership for Education’s Multiplier and School Health & Nutrition Technical Assistance Facility, Dubai Cares’ efforts in Senegal, the Rockefeller Foundation’s investments in food systems, debt swaps, as well as the European Union’s investments scaling up integrated approaches and supporting girls’ school attendance in difficult contexts. Solutions to increase fiscal space and support low-income countries with financing are needed and the Sustainable Financing Initiative of the Coalition will make this its priority for 2024.
- **A new initiative led by municipalities was launched, called “Cities Feeding the Future”.** Cities play a pivotal role in implementing national school feeding policies and programmes. The new initiative will support city-to-city collaboration but also serve as a platform that can foster interaction and collaboration between cities and Coalition member states to facilitate uptake and scale up of innovations and best practices.
- **Recognizing the important role parliamentarians play in the Coalition, the International Parliamentary Network for Education presented a toolkit to enhance parliamentary engagement on school meals.** The toolkit acknowledges and supports lawmakers in their crucial tasks such as drafting and approving legislation on school meals, appropriating the budget, advocating for better quality and working with governments to monitor the implementation of programmes.
- **More than 100 civil society organizations, led by Plan International and World Vision, issued a *Joint NGO Call to Action on School Meals for adequate funding, strong nutrition standards, and independent accountability.*** We look forward to collaborating with civil society partners to take forward their proposal to develop a long-term strategic plan that would galvanize civil society collaboration in support of helping member states deliver on their commitments.

Towards 2025 and beyond – What is next for the Coalition

While the Coalition has already achieved major results, more needs to be done. Achieving our global target of ensuring all 724 million primary school children receive nutritional school meals by 2030, requires continued political commitment and additional resources and funding at both the global and national levels.

Direct action is essential. Solutions to increase fiscal space of and support to low-income countries will be given special attention in 2024, notably through the Sustainable Financing Initiative of the Coalition. In 2024, several Coalition events will take place as announced during the Summit. The Task Force will

meet at the Ministerial level in Kenya in 2024. The African Union Day of School Feeding will be celebrated in March 2024. Regional meetings will take place in West Africa (hosted by ECOWAS); Asia (hosted by Cambodia and the Philippines); and Latin America (hosted by Mexico). A technical meeting organized by the Global Child Nutrition Foundation will support country learning.

In relation with previous collective mobilization, participants discussed the need to continue to exercise political leadership to raise the issue of school meals in key global moments over the next two years, including COP28, G7, G20, Nutrition for Growth, (to be hosted by France), and the United Nations Summit for the Future, among others.

We welcomed Brazil's announcement that it will host the next Global Summit of the Coalition in 2025.

The co-Chairs of the School Meals Coalition



Brazil



Finland



France