

**SHORT ADDRESS BY THE HON. MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT, SAMUEL OFOSU AMPOFO AT THE OPENING
CEREMONY OF THE 2011 GLOBAL CHILD NUTRITION FORUM IN
NAIROBI, KENYA ON TUESDAY, 3RD MAY 2011**

HON. CHAIRMAN

THE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL CHILD NUTRITION FOUNDATION

THE PRESIDENT, PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF GLOBAL CHILD NUTRITION FOUNDATION

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THE MEDIA

DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS

It is my greatest pleasure to participate in this very important forum that brings together on an annual basis all Stakeholders of School Feeding Programmes around the world to deliberate on pertinent issues that assures the progress and development of Child Nutrition and School Feeding

Programme on a global basis. I did not hesitate at all in accepting to associate with activities connected with School Feeding Programme which is of crucial relevance to our national development.

Distinguished Participants, First of all, I bring you greetings from the Government and people of Ghana. The theme for this Forum “**Scaling up Sustainability: Linking School Feeding with Agriculture Development to Maximize Food Security**” is very much appropriate because for us in Ghana, the overall goal of the school feeding programme is to enhance food security.

Ghana’s domestic economy is predominantly driven by subsistence farming; employing almost 60% of the workforce. Relatively good progress is also being made in addressing food insecurity. Interventions like the Buffer Stock Management, Youth in Agriculture Programme among others are all initiatives by government to enhance food security and reduce income variability for farmers.

Distinguished Participants, the Government of Ghana is very committed to the successful implementation and sustainability of the School Feeding Programme. In Ghana, the School Feeding Programme started in the year 2005 following African Union-New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AU-NEPAD) recommendation to use home-grown foods, where possible, as

one of the “Quick Impact Initiatives” to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially for rural areas facing the dual challenge of high chronic malnutrition and low agricultural productivity. Ultimately, the programme is also expected to impact on the Millennium Development Goals.

Distinguished Participants the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) is a very important social intervention for the Government and people of Ghana. As you are aware the basic concept of the programme is to provide children in selected public primary schools with one hot, nutritious meal, prepared from locally grown foodstuffs on every school going day. The aim is to spend 80% of the feeding costs in the local economy. These aspirations remain relevant and desirable, by all standards and when effectively implemented, the programme would contribute to reducing hunger and poverty, boosting primary education and food security and creating jobs.

Distinguished Participants currently, about 700,000 pupils nationwide are benefitting from the Programme. Although the Ghana School Feeding Programme has chalked some successes, it has also gone through some challenges. The rapid growth of the programme was not accompanied by the required establishment of robust management and accountability systems. This lapse contributed in a deviation in the implementation of the 2007-2010

GSFP Programme Document. Although the programme intended to be managed at the district level , inadequate GSFP information sharing between different levels of Government left district and school level decision makers, as well as intended beneficiaries often in the dark about objectives and strategies of the programme. The Programme was also intended to benefit the marginalized and those from deprived communities but there was a deviation from this target group.

Over the past five years of implementation, a lot of lessons have been learnt in relation to the GSFP. We have realized at great cost, the importance of efficient and effective management and administrative systems, particularly for monitoring & evaluation. We have also discovered afresh, the value of accountability to all stakeholders.

Distinguished Participants to address all these challenges in a systematic manner, a Social Accountability Project (SAP) was initiated in 2009. The funding partners for the Social Accountability Project are Dutch Embassy (80%), GoG (13%), SNV (5%) and SIGN (2%). The project is intended to enhance Ghanaians ownership of and responsiveness to the School Feeding Programme. Through improving its social accountability, we expect to improve transparent implementation, pursue efficiency and value –

for- money and reach a maximum number of Ghanaians, directly and indirectly.

Distinguished Participants Amongst its objectives, the Project seeks to promote a functional and objective management system at all levels of the GSFP. It also intends to ensure effective information-dissemination about the Programme including its policies, objectives, targets, financial resources, the results ultimately the impacts. The Social Accountability Project will pay attention to both vertical and horizontal linkages, across government agencies at all levels as well as civil society and NGO entities as relevant.

Distinguished Participants currently Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs) are being sensitized on their roles and responsibilities in the Ghana School Feeding Programme. Six (6) out of ten (10) regions have been sensitized so far. This forum also served as a platform where service providers (caterers) and District Agriculture Officers interacted. All of this is to strengthen the agricultural linkage to the Programme. However what the farmers concern have been are the communities not benefitting from the School feeding programme. Just last week I received the baseline data from the SNV - led independent CSOs Monitoring & Evaluation of the Social Accountability Project within the GSFP. I was surprised to learn that from the

baseline data collected from 69 districts, 66.9% of service providers interviewed procure foodstuffs from local farmers. Ghana is registering this low figure because of the concentration of schools in the two (2) big cities Accra and Kumasi. This gave me the encouragement that with some stringent measures linking School Feeding with Agriculture Development will be maximized.

Distinguished Participants as per the Programme Document of the GSFP, the first phase of the GSFP should have ended in December 2010. Cabinet has however given one year extension of phase one to allow for end of project activities to be carried out i.e end of programme evaluation and re-designing of the next phase. Also because most of the districts got their targeting wrong especially in the urban arrears, Cabinet has approved the re-targeting of the programme. An inter-ministerial committee will be set up to oversee all of these activities.

Distinguished Participants, with the support of the Dutch Government, procurement of a consultant is being finalized and preparatory work for the evaluation of the first phase has commenced.

In preparing for the second phase, looking at the benefits of Home Grown School Feeding Programme, my Ministry will recommend to cabinet the need for a national policy to govern the programme.

Distinguished Participants To conclude, for us in Ghana this forum is timely because the country is preparing for the second phase of the School Feeding Programme and the outcome of this forum will definitely serve as an input into our second phase especially in the areas of;

1. Strengthening the local procurement of foodstuffs also
2. Targeting Criteria
3. Ensuring improved agricultural production and institutional development and building linkages of all sectors involved in the Programme.

We are also grateful to PCD for supporting the preparation of a Technical Assistance Plan has been a working document for the Ghana School Feeding Programme.

We also continue to seek technical assistance from you, various international organizations and School Feeding Stakeholders around the world gathered here today to support the Government of Ghana in whatever ways you can. Our doors are always open to you at all times, so as to help us address our

challenges. I once again deem it a great honour for me to join you for this year's Global Child Nutrition Forum to deliberate on issues that will strengthen the linkages between school feeding, agriculture and community development around the world.

On this note, I wish you all very successful deliberations.

THANK YOU FOR THE ATTENTION.