

Transcript – speech PgH: Federal Minister Dr Müller

Dear Minister Klöckner, we stand together when it comes to “Policies against Hunger worldwide”

Thanks to everyone who is participating in today’s event, thus highlighting the importance of this topic. It is, after all, the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No 2: to create a world without hunger. A world in which we reduce poverty. And this time, it is about children in particular.

If in developing countries children miss the only meal of the day due to school closures, as is the case during the current coronavirus pandemic, millions of them go hungry. About 400 million children must do without regular school meals because of the pandemic. The lockdown has forced authorities in Africa, India, but also Venezuela and many countries in the world to close schools. The result: “No food.” Even before the coronavirus crisis hit, about 800 million people suffered from hunger. I said people – but in fact, two thirds of them are children, who go to bed hungry every night and whose parents don’t know what to put on the table the next day.

Hunger is also an obstacle to education, because children need to work so that their families can eat. Because this is how hunger and poverty are passed on from generation to generation. Without education, in turn, it is impossible to leave poverty behind. School feeding is therefore more than just providing a meal, in particular in conflict regions, where 75% of the chronically undernourished children live.

This is why the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development has many projects to promote healthy diets for school children in developing countries. We are one of the major partners of the World Food Programme, which received the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize – and rightly so. There is far too little appreciation for what this organisation is doing across the globe to combat hunger.

Fighting hunger is peace policy. We, the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, have reached 1,200 schools through our cooperation since 2019, and it could and should be much more in the future. But the Covid-19 pandemic also shows us that we need a paradigm shift. Food systems worldwide must become more sustainable and equitable. It is about the question of how much of the food produced ends up in trash bins rather than on plates. In the developing world, up to 40% of the food produced is lost. We have to take action in the agricultural sector, in retail and consumption.

It is possible to defeat hunger worldwide by 2030. It will be up to us if we want to achieve this. We know what has to be done. But knowledge alone is not enough. We must put it to action!

With the Food Systems Summit in September, the United Nations want to accelerate this change. It is good news that the topic of school feeding has been included on the Summit’s agenda.

A world without hunger is possible!

We at the Federal Ministry for Development have asked experts and scientists from all fields of research: what is necessary to make it happen? The political will to resolve this issue and to put it on the very top of the international agenda is needed. And a strong commitment of course. With additional 40 billion US Dollars annually until 2030, we could invest in infrastructure, agriculture, and the food sector, and create a world free of hunger.

Is this not a great goal? But we must all act and everyone needs to do more. Countries, organisations, companies, science, and civil society. Because it is about our future and the future of our children.

I would like to thank the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture and my colleague, Julia Klöckner. We and all of you are embarking on this journey together.