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**Statement by the Russian Federation on item 9 of the Provisional Agenda
“The road to transformative agrifood systems in Europe and Central Asia –
Regional actions to implement the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31”**

Russian Federation

Background note

On item 9 of the provisional agenda of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for Europe

"The road to transformative agrifood systems in Europe and Central Asia – Regional actions to implement the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31"

Our region – Europe and Central Asia – encompasses 54 countries. At present 10 countries in the region, with a total population of more than 250 million people (21 000 000 km²) have not supported the unilateral sanctions imposed by Western countries against Russia and other states. Some of these countries are members of the Eurasian Economic Union and linked with Russia by close economic and trading ties. The imposition of illegal sanctions against Russia and other restrictive measures that, as already acknowledged, show all the characteristics of economic war, is impacting these states. Several countries without access to the coast utilise Russian transport and logistics infrastructure for their exports. They are currently encountering difficulties in the process of delivering their products and receiving export goods due to the blocking of transport routes. In this way, the sanctions imposed against the Russian Federation reach far "beyond the borders" of the country, and are damaging the well-being and sustainable development of our neighbouring states. The mechanisms of the Eurasian Economic Union, including the principles of the free movement of capital, workforce, goods and services, total volumes of the economy, and natural and human resources of member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union will make it possible to offset this negative impact, which is clearly discriminatory towards the member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union.

The Russian Federation played an active part in the development of the Strategic Framework 2022-2031, on which the *four betters* are based, and is ready to continue to contribute to its implementation.

Better production. In the context of the Strategy for Development of Agriculture and Fisheries Through 2030 and the Food Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation, approved by the President of Russia in 2020, the Russian Federation will achieve consistent development of the agriculture and food industry. Priority focus areas continue to be: the supply of the sector with fuel, oil and lubricants, new agricultural technology and replacement parts for it, seed and breeding production. In the near future, there are plans to increase land reclamation and bring new land into agricultural production, to expand mechanization and the use of information technology in agriculture, increase access to credit resources for the modernization of production and the fishing fleet, and develop agricultural infrastructure. In other words, we will use the full arsenal of opportunities for state support of the agro-industrial system, using additional financing from the

federal budget to bolster agricultural production with the aim of ensuring the food security of the country, and also supporting the stability of the global food market.

In that context, the restoration of the North Crimean Canal, through which the supply of water to Crimea was completely blocked by the authorities of Ukraine on 30 April 2017, is of separate significance. Due to the water blockade, to which the international community has paid no attention for at least 5 years, Crimea has been deprived of 1100 million cubic meters a year (approximately 50 percent) which was previously used in agriculture.

Crimea is located in a zone of precarious agriculture, and so up to 50 percent of vineyard acreage, around 30 thousand hectares of rice crops and fruit orchards suffered from the termination of the water supply, while thirsty crops such as corn, rice, soybeans, vegetables, and gourds were taken out of production almost entirely, the volume of animal fodder was reduced, the volume of vegetables in the ground was reduced. The water blockade has had a serious impact on the ecology of Crimea in terms of the salinization of the land. Restoring the 35 thousand hectares affected in 2020 alone cost over 263 million Russian roubles (about 4 million US dollars).

Ecosystems suffered seriously, the water table fell, the wetlands shrank. The establishment of the water blockade of Crimea was a violation of several international conventions, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11 (right to adequate food, freedom from hunger, equitable distribution of world food supplies).

The imposition of the ban on air, rail, road haulage and maritime connections is seriously disrupting parts of the cross-border supply chains for food and agricultural raw materials outside of Europe, including in developing countries.

Better nutrition. The imposed sanctions are preventing the access of the population of Russia, and also of countries not subject to the sanctions, to healthy food. The EU sanctions packages restrict the supply of seeds and vegetative material, replacement parts for agricultural equipment, agricultural reprocessing enterprises and so on.

Separate mention is warranted of the withdrawal of a number of major producers of specialized medical foods, including baby foods, from the Russian market due to political pressure. In this way, the sanctions are impacting the most vulnerable sections of society – children, the elderly, and people with chronic illnesses who require special diets. This violates their right to quality nutrition, to health and to life.

Better environment. The sanctions are also having an impact on the high-tech manufacturing sector, including the supply of purification equipment for agro-industrial enterprises.

According to data from IEA, OECD, US EIA, Deutsche Bank, and SENEK, Europe is four times more dependent on Russian gas than the United States of America. Alternative sources (Venezuela, Iran, Saudi Arabia) for oil imports will not be able to replace supplies from Russia to the same extent.

A reduction in the volume of imports, which would potentially bring down the economy of Western Europe – is an unlikely scenario.

One possible scenario – if the policy of sanctions on oil and gas in Russia continues – is an increase in coal supply, which will have an immediate negative impact on the climate change situation.

The last report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – described as "an atlas of human suffering" by UN Secretary General António Guterres – offered a harsh assessment of the huge economic and human costs associated even with just the early consequences of climate change, that the world is already experiencing.

In this context we wish to note that the refusal to import fuel from Russia, which has always been a reliable supplier, would negate all the efforts invested by the global community over recent decades to combat climate change.

Better life. The Russian Federation is a key state outside of Western Europe to receive labour migrants from several countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It is worth noting that, just in the three months from July to September 2021, the remittances to CIS countries from labour migrants from Russia reached a record USD 3 billion. Cross-border remittances are an important source of external financing for countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The sanctions war and illegal seizure of – essentially a raid on – the assets of the Russian Central Bank, and the accounts and property of Russian companies abroad, is intended to provoke a default and devaluation of the rouble. At the same time, this scenario ricochets on to the countries that receive remittances from migrants. Not only is this not conducive to a healthy diet and healthy food, it also fundamentally throws into doubt the well-being of many families in these countries, which in turn fuels the need for an increase in state social protection, imposing an undue burden on these countries.

Despite the fact that Russia is facing serious challenges, which will be long-term in nature, our country is prepared to continue the transformation of its national food system in application of the recommendations of the UN Food Systems Summit (New York, September 2021), in accordance with national priorities. Our country has maintained a national dialogue on food systems with the participation of all stakeholders, and within the framework of this mechanism, sustainable agricultural development issues are being actively discussed.

Despite the pressure of the sanctions, Russia is ready to continue providing financial and technical assistance through FAO to countries that need it. In particular, the first phases of projects to restore agricultural production in Syria (USD 2 million) and a project to strengthen food security in several Central Asian and Transcaucasian countries (USD 6 million) were completed at the end of 2021.

According to the President of the World Bank Group, David Malpass, the Russian economy is an integral part of the global economy whether the countries of the West like it or not. In his estimation, our share of the global economy is valued at no less than USD 1.5 trillion. The sanctions policy of the West and

the attempts to exclude Russia from the global economy, especially its food and energy sectors, will, according to Malpass, have major consequences not only for Russia and Ukraine, but also for the entire global economy. The collective sanctions against Russia by the USA and the EU are the first example in modern history of confrontation between member countries of the Group of 20. It will have huge consequences for the global economy, including undermining the level of trust in international financial institutions, and also the global currency reserves.